R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 018 437 TE 000 403

CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN TEACHING ENGLISH, 1967-68, A FIFTH REPORT OF THE NCTE COMMITTEE ON PROMISING PRACTICES.

BY- BEELER, A.J. EMERY, DONALD W.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENG.,CHAMPAIGN,ILL

PUB DATE 67

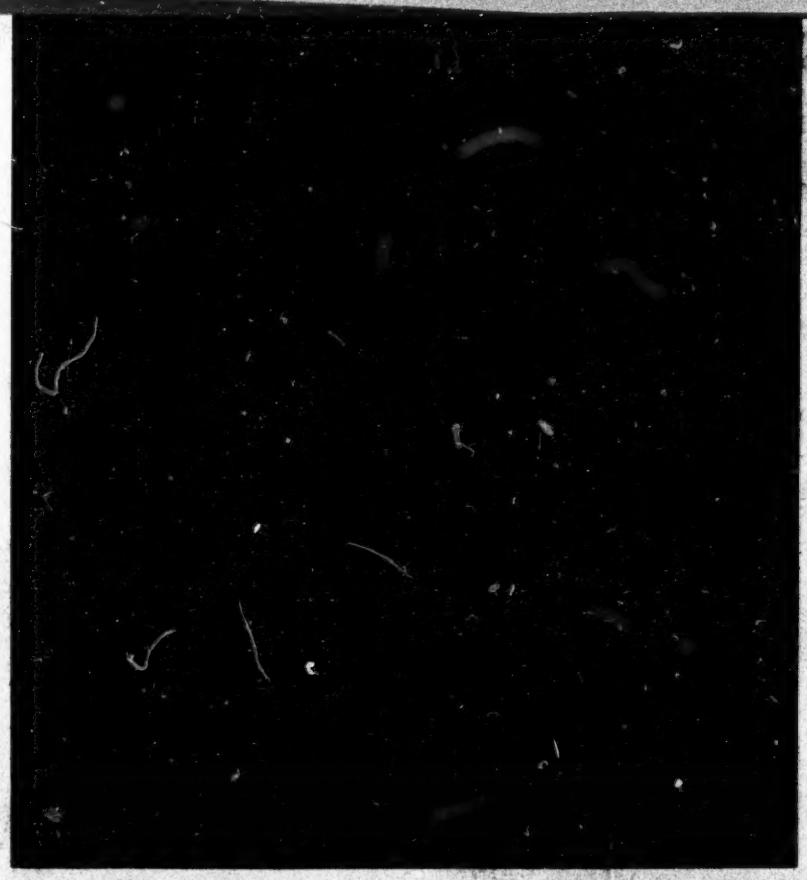
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.50 HC NOT AVAILABLE FROM EDRS. 99P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES, *EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION, *ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, *LANGUAGE ARTS, *TEACHING TECHNIQUES, COMPOSITION (LITERARY), ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, LITERATURE, READING, SECONDARY EDUCATION, TEACHING PROCEDURES, WRITING,

THIS FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NCTE COMMITTEE ON PROMISING PRACTICES CONTAINS 24 PIECES BY CLASSROOM TEACHERS ABOUT INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES WHICH THEY HAVE FOUND TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH. THE 15 FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES ARE GATHERED UNDER TWO HEADS, "READING AND LITERATURE" AND "WRITING." IN ADDITION, NINE BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS OF SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM PRACTICES ARE INTERSPERSED AMONG THE ARTICLES. SOME OF THE CONCERNS OF THE PRACTICES REPORTED ARE MOTIVATION FOR POETRY STUDY, OUTSIDE READING, BOOK REPORTS, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LITERARY REVIEW MAGAZINES, CONTEMPORARY THEATER, HUMANITIES COURSES, RESEARCH PAPERS, VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT EVALUATION OF THEMES, SLANG, AND FREE ASSOCIATION EXERCISES TO INITIATE WRITING. (THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR $1.25 FROM NCTE, 508 SOUTH SIXTH STREET, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS 61820, ORDER NO. 00821.) (RD)

'67—'68

ED018437

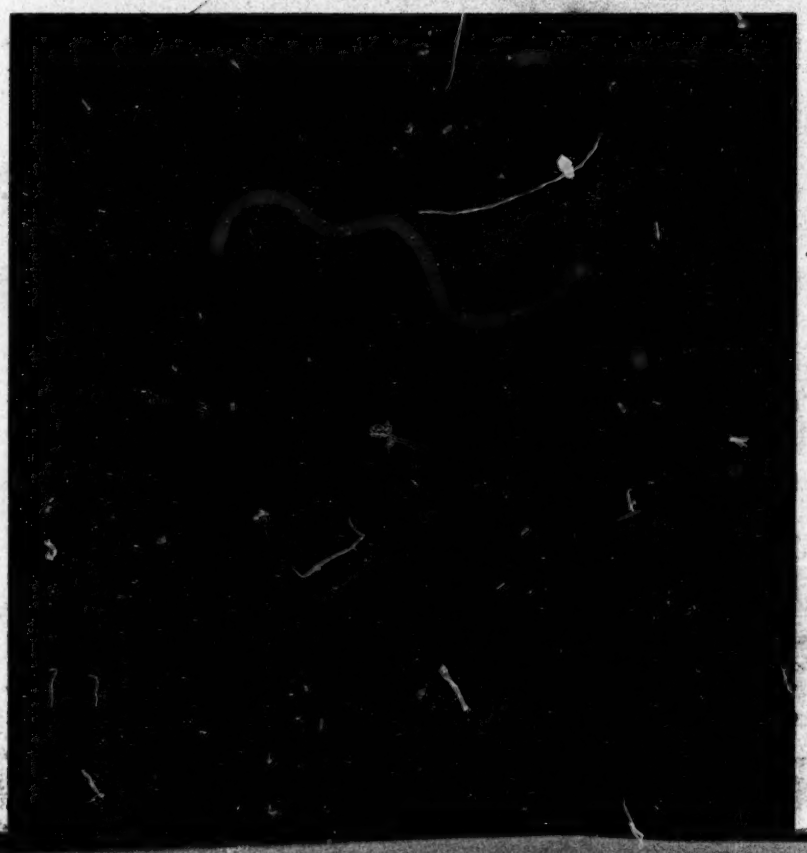


CLASSROOM PRACTICES in Teaching English

A Fifth Report of the NCTE Committee on Promising Practices

Cochairmen: A. J. Beeler and Donald W. Emery

TE000 403



National Council of Teachers of English

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

CLASSROOM PRACTICES in Teaching English 1967-1968

A Fifth Report of the NCTE Committee on Promising Practices

Cochairmen: A. J. Beeler and Donald W. Emery

National Council of
Teachers of English

Consultant Readers of This Manuscript

Verda Evans, Directing Supervisor, English and Language Arts, Cleveland Public Schools, Ohio

Ruth Overfield, Consultant in Elementary Education, California State Department of Education

Robert D. Robinson, Chairman, Department of English, Shawnee Schools, Lima, Ohio

NCTE Committee on Publications

James R. Squire, NCTE Executive Secretary, *Chairman*

Robert M. Gorrell, University of Nevada

John C. Maxwell, Upper Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory, St. Paul, Minnesota

Walter J. Moore, University of Illinois

Enid M. Olson, NCTE Director of Publications

Editorial Services
Judith Fuller
Catherine Petroski
NCTE Headquarters

Copyright 1967

National Council of Teachers of English
508 South Sixth Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Robert F. Hogan, NCTE TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U. S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

The Committee on Promising Practices in the Teaching of English

COCHAIRMEN

A. J. Beeler
Curriculum Coordinator
Louisville Public Schools
Louisville, Kentucky

Donald W. Emery
Professor of English
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

MEMBERS

Juanita N. Abernathy
Georgia State Department of Education
Atlanta, Georgia

James E. Farrell, S. J.
University of Detroit High School
Detroit, Michigan

Sister Philippa Coogan, B.V.M.
Holy Angels Academy
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Margaret Gillespie
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii

Marie B. Dickinson
Los Angeles County Schools
Los Angeles, California

William Jameson
Essex Junction High School
Essex Junction, Vermont

Edward R. Fagan
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

Albert L. Lavin
Tamalpais High School
Larkspur, California

Bernice J. Wolfson
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

PREFACE

Members of the National Council of Teachers of English have come to expect each November the report of the NCTE Committee on Promising Practices in the Teaching of English. What started in 1963 as an experimental report to the profession has developed into a yearly progress report on classroom practices that have proved successful for English teachers around the country. The Committee on Publications joins the Committee on Promising Practices in presenting this publication for your consideration. They hope that the ideas suggested here may help you and will stimulate you to send in your own reports in other years.

James R. Squire, *Chairman*
Committee on Publications

INTRODUCTION

The NCTE Committee on Promising Practices in the Teaching of English has developed a working definition to sharpen the focus of its search for practices to describe in its annual report: Practices should be innovative but not "gimmicky"; they may be somewhat familiar to some teachers, but new to others; they should be sufficiently extensive in the development of ideas; and they should be valuable. The Committee also agreed to use the terms *English* and *language arts* interchangeably for the purpose of its publication; regardless of the title, listening, speaking, reading, literature, language, and composition are all interactively involved.

The Committee has agreed upon the following value assumptions as guidelines in the selection of materials:

1. Education should be designed to support individuality and to allow for individual differences in motivation, pace, and style of learning.
2. It is desirable that students learn to learn for themselves rather than for the teacher or for extrinsic rewards.
3. Active learning and evaluation of their progress by the students are necessary conditions for significant learning.
4. Language is a tool for communicating thought and feeling; creative and individual use of language should be encouraged.
5. The teacher must take the responsibility for choosing the kinds of materials and situations appropriate for the pupils in his class.
6. There is no best sequence of learning nor a best structure of knowledge. Students should be helped to structure their own learning and to become aware of alternative structures and sequences.

The Committee considered these facts in the selection of articles to be included in this publication. From a large number of articles submitted, the Committee chose fifteen full-length articles and nine short descriptions of promising practices to be included in this bulletin. The longer articles have been grouped into two categories, Reading and Literature, and Writing. Shorter articles explaining "some ideas that have worked" have been interspersed at convenient places throughout.

Group I, Reading and Literature, contains seven articles which deal with the teaching of reading and literature at various grade levels. One article discusses a successful method of whetting the appetites of high school students for a study of poetry. This is followed by a description of a free-reading experiment in outside reading, again at the high school level. Two teachers present accounts of fresh ways of handling the perennial problem of book reports: a third grade teacher directs the publication of a literary review magazine, and a high school teacher combines the writing of book reports with a study of the types of writing

found in a newspaper. Two high school teachers provide the details of successful experiences with a unit on contemporary theater and with a course in the humanities. A college instructor tells of his plan to help non-English majors interpret literature and express their ideas about it.

Group II, Writing, consists of eight articles on various phases of the writing program at the secondary and college levels. Two junior college teachers tell of their successful plan of motivating and improving the writing skills of remedial English students. Three papers are concerned with the term or research paper: one teacher describes a series of "dry-run" exercises in preparation for the library-oriented thesis paper; another tells how he substitutes a profile-type character analysis in order to achieve many of the goals of a long paper; still another gives an account of a successful project in which he and a college-bound group of students prepared research papers simultaneously. Others teachers describe plans for combining vocabulary development and paragraph writing and for using free association exercises to start student writing. A college instructor explains his method of teaching students to mark their own papers. A high school teacher presents a plan of using contemporary slang to precipitate an interest in language and writing.

Scattered throughout the pamphlet are several short articles describing a variety of approaches to effective teaching of English. These "ideas that have worked" are firsthand experiences of teachers who submitted them for publication.

The Committee particularly wishes to remind its readers that these articles are offered to broaden their own opportunities to make informed choices. No practice reported here can be used exactly as described by a different teacher with different students. Each teacher may adapt and use any aspects of these practices that fit into his own view of teaching and learning. The members of the committee hope that each reader will feel encouraged to try out something he has not done before.

The cochairmen wish to thank all who have contributed to the book; they are especially grateful to Marie Dickinson and Bernice Wolfson, who with them read and evaluated all manuscripts considered.

A. J. Beeler
Donald W. Emery
Cochairmen

CONTENTS

I. READING AND LITERATURE

Teaching Poetry—The First Fifty Minutes, *George R. Turner* .. 3

"How Do You Spell 'Psychedelic'?": An Exercise in Usage and Correctness, *D. L. Emblen* 5

"Like a Living Room with Many Books": An Experiment in Reading, *Lillian Schiff* 7

"Visions of Corvettes and Thunderbirds": A Vocabulary Device, *Harvey Wilkes* 13

Publishing a Literary Review Magazine in the Elementary School, *Eileen Tway* 15

"An Important Ingredient in Teaching Materials for the Disadvantaged is Relevance to the Student," *Margaret Fleming* 17

New News for Book Reports, *Charles R. Chew* 19

A Look at the Contemporary Theatre: Theatre and Anti-Theatre, *Aileen R. Henderson* 23

Any Answer Is Acceptable–If Suggested through Words or Mood: A Tip for Teaching Poetry, *Ethel K. Harte* 33

A Humanities Course in the High School, *Henriette N. Alovis* .. 35

Literature and Writing, *John J. Hassett* 39

Concern: To Discover the Value of Additional Personal Attention for Pupils by Limiting Teacher Load to 100 Students, *Vincent P. Skinner* 43

II. WRITING

Highly Structured Writing Assignments, *Audrey J. Roth and Thelma C. Altshuler* 47

Role-Playing for Slow Learners, *Harvey Wilkes* 53

An Antidote for the Term Paper Headache, *Neal Resnikoff* 55

A Substitute for the Research Paper, *E. Graham Ward* 63

The Writing Skills of the English Teacher: If Gold Rusts, What Will Iron Do? *Raymond Hollman* 67

Five Birds with One Small Stone: The Vocabulary Paragraph, *Dorothy Lambert* 71

Free Association: A Writing Assignment that Works, *Robert G. Lambert* 75

A Technique for Theme Correction, *Michael Grady* 77
"The World Is Full of Wonders": Write All about It!
Verona F. Rothenbush 82
Using the Overhead Projector to Intensify Time and Interest
Factors in English Instruction, *Lois Wilson Parker* 83
Slang '66, *Diane Weissberger* 85
"The Better I Am Able to Stir the Imagination of the Students,
the Better the Students Write," *Verona F. Rothenbush* 89

I. READING AND LITERATURE

George R. Turner is Associate Professor
in English, Norwich University

D. L. Emblen is an Instructor in the
Department of English, Santa Rosa
Junior College, Santa Rosa, California

Lillian Schiff is a Teacher of English,
Paul D. Schreiber High School,
Port Washington, New York

Harvey Wilkes is a Teacher of English,
Harry A. Eiseman Junior High School
Brooklyn, New York

Eileen Tway is a Third Grade Teacher,
The Laboratory Schools, University of Chicago

Margaret Fleming is Supervisor of
Bureau of Educational Research,
Cleveland Public Schools,
Cleveland, Ohio

Charles R. Chew is a Teacher of English,
Jefferson Township High School,
Oak Ridge, New Jersey

Aileen R. Henderson is Chairman of the
English Department, Hall High School,
Little Rock, Arkansas

Ethel K. Harte is Chairman of the
English Department, Newtown High School,
Newtown, Connecticut

Henriette N. Alovis is Chairman of the
English Department, Pascack Hills High School,
Montvale, New Jersey

John J. Hassett is a Member of the
English Department, Fordham University

Vincent P. Skinner is Assistant Program
Coordinator, COMPRO Project,
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.,
Charleston, West Virginia

Teaching poetry—the first fifty minutes

GEORGE R. TURNER

Realizing that teaching poetry to high school students calls for the light touch, most teachers approach the first session of a poetry unit with a modest aim: to whet appetites. This is wise, for if they are ever to succeed in teaching the various elements of poetic form, they must develop in their students a taste for poetry.

The paragraphs which follow are, in effect, a lesson plan for the first fifty minutes of a poetry unit, a plan designed to guide the teacher through every minute of his first class session in poetry, if he chooses to use it that way, or to provide flexible working materials for the teacher who prefers an approach somewhat different from the one suggested. Simple fare, it is the choicest offering to date of one who has spent many years experimenting with and catering to an almost incredible range of youthful appetites.

Before the class begins, copy the following poem on the board, omitting the title:

> He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
> Close to the sun in lonely lands,
> Ringed with the azure world, he stands.
>
> The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
> He watches from his mountain wall,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls.

While bringing the class to order and checking attendance, you will notice a number of inquisitive students craning their necks to read what is written behind you. As a matter of fact, you can expect a question about it before you reach Zuggerman on your seating chart.

In starting the session, say nothing about the poem itself; merely tell the class to study it a few moments and then to write on a piece of paper what they think the missing title might be. Point out clearly that each student will be asked (1) to read his title aloud and (2) to justify his title on the basis of clues which he has found in the poem.

Your next five minutes will probably be spent in restraining over-

zealous volunteers and discouraging over-the-shoulder peekers. When you feel that each student has had sufficient time to invent a title, go around the class, asking each student to read his title without commenting on it. Refrain from comment yourself.

In a class of, say, twenty-five students you can expect

a. two to five complete blanks
b. three or four outlandish titles
c. at least one title referring to God or Christ
d. "The Mountain Climber"
   "The Suicide"
   "The Seagull"
   "The Hawk"
e. occasionally, "The Eagle"—usually from the student who has read Tennyson before.

When all titles have been read, ask each student to justify his choice. Skipping the students whose titles may eventually cause them some embarrassment, first call upon those who provide titles that can be challenged easily in the opening lines of the poem. In justifying his title, each student reads the poem aloud, pointing out clues to his title as they appear. You or the class may interrupt him at any time to point out bypassed clues that he might also have used to justify his title. You will find, however, that the class is far more eager to introduce evidence that will discredit the defender's title.

Some titles have trouble surviving "crooked hands"; others, such as "The Mountain Climber" or "The Suicide," fare reasonably well until they come up against "*And like a thunderbolt he falls.*" (You must be careful not to expose too many clues yourself in the early stages of the discussion. Be tolerant and patient.) "The Sea Gull" cannot be entirely discounted until a number of images have been examined, such as that of the robber baron presiding over his domain. Finally, you and the class may need support from Audubon to convince a student that Tennyson could not have been describing a hawk in this poem.

As the session progresses and titles are discussed, the students who blanked out earlier frequently have belated titles to offer, while others want to improve upon their original choices. What is happening, of course, is that the students are beginning to see through imagery and to understand what poetry is all about. The pieces are falling together, and the poem is emerging as controlled, integrated expression.

Before the session ends, you will discover that the students themselves have cleared the way for whatever step you wish to take next in

your poetry unit. As a follow-up homework assignment, you might mimeograph copies of some poem not likely to be found easily by short-cutters. A poem such as Robert Haven Schauffler's "Divers" will do nicely:

> Clad in thick mail he stumbles down the floor
> Of the dark primeval ocean;—on his head
> A casque more gross than ever helmeted
> Crusader against Saracen. Before
> His glass-dimmed eyes dart shapes like fiends of yore,
> Or like malignant spirits of the dead,
> To snatch and snap the line where through is fed
> A meagre air to that strange visitor.
> Stumbling we grope and stifle here below
> In the gross garb of this too cumbering flesh,
> And draw such hard-won breaths as may be drawn,
> Until, perchance with pearls, we rise and go
> To doff our diver's mail and taste the fresh,
> The generous winds of the eternal dawn.[1]

Once again, instruct your students to supply a title for the poem and to justify it, this time in a paragraph or two, to be read in class at the next meeting and then handed in. I trust that long before then you will have decided what course to follow in the second fifty minutes.

[1] Robert Haven Schauffler, *The Magic Flame and Other Poems* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1933), p. 67.

"How do you spell 'psychedelic'?" An exercise in usage and correctness[1]

D. L. EMBLEN

A simple but convincing opportunity for students themselves to discover the relationship of linguistic change to the concept of correctness is offered by almost any word whose general acceptance has followed the publication of *Webster's Third International Dictionary*.

[1] Note: This article was written prior to the publication of the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, in which the word *psychedelic* may be found. The point of Mr. Emblen's article is no less viable in light of this fact, for teachers should have no difficulty substituting a more current word for the example given here.

An example that has been profitable for my classes is the word *psychedelic*. Not only does it satisfy the critical requirement of *not* being included in the dictionaries available to the students, but it touches on a subject of intense interest to many of them.

The procedure is simplicity itself: the instructor merely asks in class, "How do you spell *psychedelic?*" Obviously, he can not provide the question in written form. All that is left for him to do is to explain whatever mechanics of the assignment he might require. "On Monday turn in your conclusion and a brief explanation of what you did to arrive at that conclusion."

The exercise works better if the instructor does not tell the students that they will not find the word in a standard dictionary. That, of course, is part of the discovery—that is, the revelation that there *is* a linguistic problem involved. They must then derive a "correct" spelling in precisely the way the lexicographer must work: they must collect evidence from actual usage and come to a decision based upon a study of that evidence. Once they begin looking, students will find ample evidence in posters, signs, periodical literature, newspapers, textbooks, and the like. If it seems appropriate, the exercise might also be used to teach the techniques of precise and adequate documentation, and the instructor may insist upon a particular form for identifying the sources of information.

When the papers have been turned in, they will provide many particular opportunities for drawing the students out on related topics: e.g., the relative reliability of various sources, the relationship of etymology to "correctness," the nature of "general acceptance," what constitutes an adequate sample, the penalties and the rewards of linguistic conformity, honesty in research procedures, etc., all of which have demonstrable relevance to other work attempted in most freshman composition courses.

Obviously, the exercise is most effective if it emerges from a context of discussion and reading on the linguistic and social aspects of "correctness."

"Like a living room with many books": an experiment in reading

LILLIAN SCHIFF

I have just had a good experience with very silent reading. For two classes of quite average seniors I set out all that my book closet held—mostly books I had used for other classes this year—several of my own books, and some our departmental bookroom could spare. "Help yourself; read for two weeks; I'll be available for suggesting books and answering questions; I'll use some of the time for conferring with those of you who need help in writing and reading."

For two weeks I observed relaxed reading, no clockwatching, no rush to leave. Five pupils read six pieces of literature; most read three. Several took books home. I strained not to direct any follow-up. In both classes discussion grew out of my casual questions about students' reaction to my "experiment." While I achieved one of my own aims—seeing uninterested students read something with attention, as well as seeing other students' amazing concentration—the students themselves were also satisfied in one way or another.

> "I never would have read all these books on my own."
>
> "If I didn't like something, I went up and exchanged it for something else."
>
> "I really appreciated the two weeks. I'm sure I never read thirty minutes at a time at home. There's the refrigerator and the phone and my chores. And who goes to the library to read a play?"
>
> "It was a good change. Teachers talk to much, anyway. I read 'The Lottery' in the one-act play book. Now I can't get the thought of scapegoats out of my mind.
>
> "Everything I read made me think about myself and what I believe."

I received some suggestions for change and improvement too:

> "I still hate to read. You should have taught me something in those two weeks."
>
> "Two weeks is too long."

"Try one week, four or five times during the year."

"The choice of books wasn't large enough."

"Oh, it was so-so."

On a large table and bookshelves I had piled *The Picture of Dorian Gray, April Morning, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Pearl, Light in the Forest, The Loved One, Catcher in the Rye;* copies of *Cavalcade* which contained *Anastasia, Witness for the Prosecution, The Corn Is Green, Marty, The Caine Mutiny Court Martial, The Shrike, Night Must Fall,* the short story "Flowers for Algernon"; also *Detective Story, Arsenic and Old Lace, The Adding Machine, All My Sons, Hiroshima, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Profiles in Courage, A Raisin in the Sun, Fifteen One-Act Plays, The Mouse That Roared, Three Negro Classics, The Great Gatsby, The Old Man and the Sea, Fail-Safe,* and *The Crucible.*

In one class, random discussion on all the choices quickly led to a two-hour preoccupation with *The Loved One.* The only reason that a number of students picked this book up was the groans of some of the initial readers; perhaps there had been some discussion of it in the cafeteria too. The reason that some of the readers kept at this book to the end may have been to the song I frequently sing: "Don't give up after the first three pages. Many books become interesting on page four."

The Loved One was described, explained, hated, and loved, mostly hated. The class had read Auden's "The Unknown Citizen," Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper," Clough's "The Latest Decalogue," in Perrine's *Sound and Sense;* they were finally able to carry their knowledge of satire into analysis of a novel. The two hours spent on this book were a gratifying example of pupils' applying recent learning and discovery of the characteristics of a literary type. They, not I, identified the marks of satire and the stylistic methods of achieving it. At first, most students wanted only to say it was disgusting and disrespectful. When they said they disliked it, a new experience for me—former students had always found it good and hilarious—I replied, "Your privilege, but how would you have known you felt this way if you hadn't read it?"

If the hour had gone more than fifteen minutes with unsupported complaints only, I would have asserted my right and obligation to lead. Fortunately, someone noticed that every time Waugh described believable happenings, he continued with his "perfectly straight face," easing into something absolutely impossible. If it is conceivable, someone else said, that an animal lover would take her dead parrot to a pet cemetery, blowing taps at the event isn't. If it is believable that a dark-eyed beauty would be passed off as a Spanish actress, even that she would learn a

flamenco tune or two to make her Spanishness look authentic, then crazy Hollywood wouldn't show the same girl as an Irish maiden after pulling her teeth, inserting dentures, and teaching her a brogue. Would the most devoted employee at a mortuary consider her work art? Would the most stupid girl who takes advice from a newspaper columnist follow his drunken advice to kill herself?

Average students often do not recognize satire even if they have read *Animal Farm* and *1984*, as some of my students had. I considered it a very good beginning for the study of this unfamiliar genre if the class begins to recognize "the straight face," the "poison pen," the targets of the author's criticism, the static heroes, the use of irony and hyperbole, the mood of "not getting anywhere." Among other things, they said of *The Loved One*:

> "That book shocked me, but it did me good. I'm used to seeing advice columns in the papers, but they always make me laugh. Aimée's taking advice from that drunk frightened me. How horribly close to being a robot that seems!"
>
> "We could have done without *The Loved One;* it was gross; it turned my stomach."
>
> "When I say I hated the book, that's putting it mildly. Death shouldn't be written about that way. It's disgusting and disrespectful."
>
> "Maybe Waugh's right about American girls being the same. Look at all the girls around here who're trying to be different."
>
> "At the beginning I thought it was going to be about a jungle. Wait a second—could Waugh mean Hollywood is a jungle?"
>
> "My mother read *The American Way of Death*. I talked about *The Loved One* with her. We agreed that satire and criticism are different even though they are the same subject."
>
> "How can anyone get so many peculiar people into one book?"
>
> "There are no people like that."

The other class converged on *Hiroshima*, although only six had read it during the experiment. I invited these experts to sit before the class to tell something about the book and answer questions. They described some experiences of the various characters, Hersey's organization of his material, his technique, the implications of the contents for the world. Although I asked two initial questions, the ensuing discussion was spontaneous.

Unlike discussion on *The Loved One*, which needed about three class periods, this one was over in a half hour. The members of this

class were not used to reading independently; several disliked reading; most could not "picture" everything they read. The response of the class to the panel's elementary description was on an elementary level:

"If we hadn't used the atomic bomb on Japan, they would have used it on us."

"I've never been President; how can I say what I would do if I had an A-bomb in wartime?"

"Why didn't they all leave? They were warned."

"Plenty of people were lucky and escaped. I'd try to do that too."

The discussion on *Hiroshima* was resumed a few days later after I had shown the film *A Night to Remember*. We were talking about the effectiveness of the title when one boy said about six times, "Just like Hiroshima, just like Hiroshima." He wasn't talking about the title. The people's suffering and behavior in Hiroshima had suddenly become real to him after he had seen a film about the *Titanic*, and he couldn't get over it. The rest of the class couldn't either.

"Well, the sinking of the *Titanic* could have been avoided and Hiroshima couldn't have."

"There must have been some way to avoid it."

"Did you see those soldiers with that stuff leaking from their eyes? They must have been looking at the sky when the bomb fell."

"From what you said, I guess even the people who survived had to suffer the rest of their lives."

"That poor woman whose skin came off like a glove when Mr. Tanimoto took her hand!"

"It must hurt terribly to be burned like that."

"People sure behave in a hundred different ways when something terrible happens."

"Remember that snowstorm last year? Did you notice that people really tried to help each other? I think everyone's good nature comes out when there's trouble."

"This was different. This was no snowstorm. Most people thought of themselves on the *Titanic* and in Hiroshima."

"But you saw plenty of people helping others in the book and in the movie too, didn't you?"

"We value human lives more now than we used to, don't we? Science ought to help prevent anything like the *Titanic* ever again, and our brains ought to prevent future wars."

Both classes insisted on probing "Flowers for Algernon," a science fiction story by Daniel Keyes, in which a moron is given the chance to become bright through an operation. Most conversation was spent digging into the morality of such an operation and examining the changes that occurred in the main character as he developed from moron to genius and back again. I'm sure my students would be insulted if they heard me say that they identified with poor Charlie more than they could with Aimée Thanatogenos or Dr. Sasake, but I believe it was true. Like him, they wanted to be smarter than they were, know more, be liked, have a good-looking girl friend, be able to show off a little. Some students experienced real pain when Charlie reverted to his original moronic state.

Since I could not become a complete angel in two weeks, I did ask for some writing on the material read and talked about. "Sell me a story or a play. Make me want to read it." Most of the students wrote letters to me, detailing their very personal reactions to a book. And, *mirabile dictu*, some of them did make me a present of what I had been begging for all year, specific somethings from the play or novel or short story to make their preference or abhorence convincing.

The two weeks' session was used mainly for introduction to varied reading possibilities and for reading encouragement. But I asked for a paragraph or two because I wanted to give each student a chance to say something about his readings and reaction to silent reading in class to someone who was interested—me. Some letters were addressed to other persons.

> "Bill, since you face ugly prospect of war some day in the near future, I have a suggestion to make. Read *Hiroshima* by John Hersey. The fact that you're a domineering person and sometimes have little respect for the feelings of other people will affect the way you react to the book. It is the story of their fight to stay alive after the radiation sickness began to develop, and their struggle to rebuild the life they used to have. Perhaps after reading this, you will have a feeling of what you will put into the life of your enemies."

> "I would hate to have lived in Salem in 1692. I know when a person does something wrong, he might have the impulse to blame it on someone else to avoid getting punished. But Abigail Williams and her friends said they had been bewitched when they were caught dancing outside Puritan Salem village, and that caused terrible suffering. They began accusing village women of being witches. I might have been accused! I might have been executed too."

> "Why did you recommend *Catcher in the Rye* to me? How did you know that's just the kind of book I love to read? Holden was right; all grown-ups

are phonies. The book embarrassed me, too, because it reminded me of how I used to pretend I was eighteen when I was fifteen. That looks so silly now."

"*April Morning* was very talky, especially when Moses Cooper, the father, started one of his religious lectures, but I had to admire the author for being able to show how families are. Boys think their strict fathers hate them and grandmothers are good for a little sympathy and a piece of cake. Kid brothers are a pain, and I myself just realized how pretty the girl next door is although we've known each other since nursery school. It is also true that when something serious like the American Revelution happens a boy becomes a man."

"The plays we are reading are about real people. I gave my older brother *Marty* to read, to cheer him up. He is thirty-two and sick and tired of hearing people ask him when he's going to get married. Like Marty he goes around with friends who want to keep their group together. They look like kids who don't want to grow up. I saw my Aunt Jenny in that play too. She calls up every day to tell my mother who's died. She's got my mother reading the obituary colums now."

"*Detective Story* reminded me of a teacher right in this school. He thinks once you've done something wrong you're a criminal for life, and that's how he treats you."

"I cried about every five pages in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Light in the Forest*."

The use of two weeks of reading and a week of discussion and writing was a conscious effort on my part to relieve pressures for a while, to make the schoolroom like a living room with many books, where a young person could find something interesting to read and not worry that he would be tested on it. That did happen, but some other things did, as well. I was reminded that appealing books make students talk and write. I learned that in some cases questions like "What would you do if you were in Mr. Truman's place?" put us in a cul-de-sac in five minutes. When the students compared the events in the books to similar ones in the lives of their cousins and uncles or when they could compare plots, or characters, or authors' mannerisms, they became excited and specific. I also learned that an author may be most graphic in his description of human suffering and not make an impression on some readers. Some students do not see pictures when they read; to them a book is not life. I observed that when a film was shown that invited comparison with a book, those students immediately "saw" the burning images of the book.

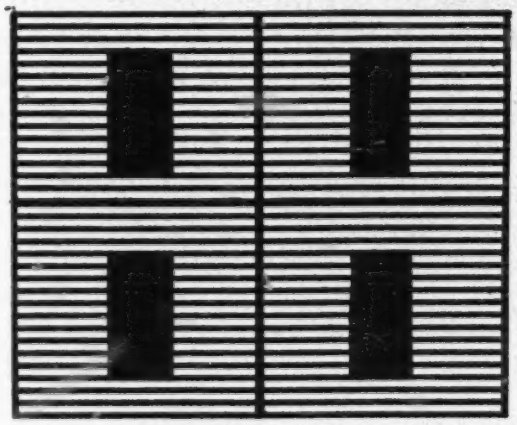
None of the material I made available is at present known as deathless prose; some pieces are said to be dated, some good but no more than good, some journalistic, some superficial, some appealing but not really litera-

ture. All that bothers me not at all. First I look at whom I'm teaching, in this case several pupils who have read very little before this year, or some more enthusiastic readers who still need much help in understanding what they read. I count the "experiment" successful if I can confer with three or four students during the reading time, if several pupils read more and with more pleasure, if Dorian Gray reminds them of Jabez Stone, if *To Kill a Mockingbird* invites comparison with *A Rasin in the Sun*, if one eternally uninterested boy takes *The Shrike* home to his physician father who then writes a commenting letter on the subject matter which edifies the class, if "The Lottery" evokes historical and biblical analogy. And, finally—and most important of all if reading is to lead students to sense their humanity—that the words "responsibility" recurred frequently in the discussion.

"Visions of Corvettes and Thunderbirds": a vocabulary device

HARVEY WILKES

In *Reading Skills* by Wood and Barrows (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1958), the authors suggest that the pupil divide a paper in the following manner:



He is now ready to "park" words. In the four rectangles are placed *annoy*, *walk*, *look*, and *destroy*. He then looks at a list of words and places each one, or "parks" it in the proper area. For example, he places *pester* next to *annoy* and *glide* next to *walk;* the point is that these words are related.

I have taken the authors' idea and with my very slow learners expanded it until each child imagined the class was an actual parking lot and he was an attendant. The pupils close their books and have only their pens and papers before them. I start dictating the list of words slowly because on weekdays parking lots fill up slowly. After a few "cars" have been "parked," I dictate faster because on weekends lots fill up with great speed and the attendant can't spend too much time maneuvering one car into place. As my rate of speed increases, so does their rate of interest. They work with frantic delight at "parking" these vehicles.

After I have finished dictating the words, I place all forty of them on the board. My pupils assign a different car model to each one. Any word they do not recognize is given a foreign car name such as Volvo or Simca. These are placed in a special part of the lot to be handled later.

When we go over the correct position of the words and a pupil is found to have "parked" it in the wrong place, the other pupils playfully taunt him with charges of mishandling a customer's car which, if repeated, could lead to his being fired from the job.

I have never taught new vocabulary words and synonyms (or learned more names of cars) in a more interesting atmosphere. It is important to prepare them for this event and carefully set the atmosphere. I have found that the best way to begin is not by having them copy the drawing from their texts; rather, I make a large copy of the diagram on newsprint and hang it on the board. I don't tell them what it represents until they have divided their paper properly. When I do, I see them perk up, and visions of Corvettes and Thunderbirds dance before their eyes.

Publishing a literary review magazine in the elementary school

EILEEN TWAY

Book reviews and book sharing are a part of most schools' language arts practices. Whether they are a vital part or just an incidental chore depends greatly upon how the reviews are used in the program. In order to give children's book reviews dignity and purpose, I have used the literary review magazine as a class project.

When my third graders began to write book reviews, I dittoed several of these and made a little booklet called "Book Notes." This was well received, for the children enjoyed seeing their work in print. To make sure they would not be self-conscious about it, I had cleared it with each reviewer before "publishing" the review. The booklet of reviews proved to be an incentive to the children to write more reviews and to want to know how to write them better. The enthusiasm continued, and there was enough material for a booklet each month. This new way of sharing ideas about books was not only exciting for the children, but it also promoted critical discussion.

The children found that their opinions about books carried more weight if they gave reasons for their statements, that it was not enough to say that they did or did not like a book, but that they should tell *why*. They began to talk and write in terms of the author's ideas, his way of writing, the way he put his story together (ideas, style, structure), as well as in terms of "what happened" in a book. Other aspects of book reviewing which were discussed by the children were characterization, viewpoint, setting, and appeal to senses. Out of these background discussion sessions, the children wrote their own honest feelings, each in his own way. There were all kinds of reviews, but they were increasingly critical in that the children were acquiring the tools with which to work.

Other people outside the classroom became interested in the children's opinions about books as they became more explicit in their reactions.

Adults (teachers, librarians, parents) found the children's comments enlightening and revealing. And children read the reviews in order to get leads about good books to read.

By the end of the first quarter, the third grade reviewers wanted to know if they could have their monthly magazine printed in the school's print shop. When permission was granted, the project took on new dimensions. After a campaign and an election, the class had an editorial advisory committee, or board, of four class members, one of whom was elected chairman. From then on, class planning sessions for the magazine were conducted by the board, with the teacher stepping into the role of secretary, doing the necessary typing, and setting up the mock magazine for the printer.

The children decided such things as format, selection of content, cover design, and the desirability of having advertising. There were all kinds of things to be decided—from the size of print to the price per copy. It was decided to charge a small fee for the magazine to give it value as well as to defray expenses.

After much planning, discussion, work, and excitement, the first "real" magazine came out, combining two months in one issue. To its youthful makers, the magazine was a rare treasure with its inviting blue cover that the children had set their hearts on, the reviews neatly arranged in alphabetical order by book titles, a few cartoons humorously drawn by the children, and an advertisement for the school's paperback book shop. The children thought the latter would be in keeping with the spirit of the magazine. The cover showed a mountain climber reaching the top of a high peak and waving a banner of achievement. On the banner was printed the name of the magazine, "Book Notes."

The class planned an open house to celebrate the success of the first issue. After that, all class members participated enthusiastically in the making of the next issue. The new cover showed the mountain climber waving his banner and taking the next step.

One of the magazine's unique features was the Criticizing-the-Critics Section in which children compared a child's review and an adult review of the same book. Permission was obtained to reprint the adult reviews, and this made the magazine appear even more professional. This part turned out to be especially interesting and thought provoking to adult readers. The children came straight to the point in their reviews, often with a simple clarity that their adult readers found refreshing.

The main benefit from the literary review magazine is, hopefully, the

habits the children stand to gain in forming independent judgments about their books. There are other gains possible, too, including desirable changes in attitudes. At the end of the year in which my class first produced a literary magazine, one boy was overheard commenting to another, "Remember last year in second grade when we had to do a book review and it was so hard and boring? Well, now when I finished my book, I knew just what I wanted to say."

When one has something to say, it is good to know how to say it, to be able to make criticisms explicit. It is also good to have one's opinions valued. When their reviews are dignified by printed form and shared with others, children will be encouraged to write more and better reviews. They will want to know how to be more critical in their reading and in their comments about their reading. Teachers who undertake the sponsorship of a literary review magazine must be prepared to lead the class in the discovery of principles of literary criticism. It can be a rewarding experience for both class and teacher.

"An important ingredient in teaching materials for the disadvantaged is relevance to the student"

MARGARET FLEMING

A remedial reading project at an inner-city high school in Cleveland demonstrated that an important ingredient in teaching materials for the disadvantaged is relevance to the students.

During the 1964-65 school year, a program was organized for students reading below a seventh grade level. Identification of the students was based on standardized reading test scores and teacher observations. Forty-seven students were assigned to a reading period in place of the usually scheduled study hall. Reading skills ranged downward from seventh to fourth grade level. On the average, the students were sixteen and a half years old.

At first, traditional commercial materials were used. An attempt

was made to use materials which would focus on the students' needs in word recognition skills, problems in usage, vocabulary, and general comprehension techniques. Analysis of results used each student as his own control to describe progress. The program did not produce the anticipated gains. It did precipitate a critical analysis of the materials.

From the teacher's log of observations of pupil participation, questions, and comments, it was evident that materials which emphasized the experiences which appeal to teenagers resulted in the more effective sessions of the reading project.

The project was reorganized for the spring semester. Retained were those materials which utilized teenage interests, identified a short selection format, set concrete goals for each selection, and provided an immediate feedback to the students in the form of checkup exercises and discussion. These selections included certain numbers from the SRA Reading Laboratory and the Turner-Livingston Series. Students were also encouraged to select from among the forty issues available at the time in the *Springboard* series. In addition, the teacher developed units of humanities materials.

The first indication that the materials were more relevant came when students carried the *Springboards* to other classes and to their friends. These four-page leaflets are based on actual experiences of teenagers. The story content and picture illustrations are centered around minority groups. The topics run the whole gamut of teenage interests, featuring stories of courage, heroes, dating, cheating, and getting along with others.

Class attendance improved. Test results indicated stronger progress, particularly in terms of mastery of vocabulary, than had been anticipated. A combination of teacher prepared materials and selected commercial materials which were pertinent to the teenager in an urban setting proved most stimulating to these students.

The most important improvement occurred for the students in their work in the regular English classes. Eighty percent of the students participating in the reading project that semester obtained passing marks in English. Only forty percent of the pupils who served as matched controls obtained passing marks in English.

New news for book reports

CHARLES R. CHEW

Our entire literature program centers around the paperback. Individual reading and group reading are called for in this program. One problem that emerges is checking on the students' reading and getting them to share their reading experiences with the other students. Nothing sells a book as much as another student's enthusiastic comments about the book, and although they at times are reluctant to share their reactions, students can be great salesmen.

Many of the professional journals indicate that teachers are going beyond the old stereotyped version of the book report, and teachers would do well to capitalize on some of these suggestions. However, it is a difficult task to make a direct tie-in with the classroom work especially in the area of extra or individual reading.

I offer the following plan to be used occasionally to help solve the book report dilemma. The plan grew out of my decision to use in my seventh grade classes a unit on the newspaper to tackle the problem of checking and sharing reading experiences. I discovered that the students needed no text, but that the teacher should have a private resource. I used a copy of *News—How It is Written and Edited* by Lewis Jordan of *The New York Times* staff.

The students brought in a copy of a daily newspaper and those who didn't do so used a newspaper from one of the social studies classes. I prepared a mimeographed sheet which gave brief explanations of the following types of newspaper articles:

General news stories
Feature articles
Interviews
Personality stories
Sports stories
Criticism
Editorials
Business and finance articles
Special features

These sheets helped the students learn about different kinds of newspaper writing. The class studied the various forms of writing included in

the concept of good lead paragraph writing (who, what, where, when, why, and how). We investigated the general news story and the news analysis. We looked for the interview and the personality story. We found editorials and saw how they differed from other types of articles. The students compared the style of writing used in criticism with that used in sports writing. Finally they compared the different types of newspapers available, noting both similarities and differences.

This opened a new field of reading and investigation to most of the class, and they were enthusiastic enough to suggest the preparation of our own class paper. At this time I capitalized on their interest and tried to tie it into their interest in the paperback. I suggested that we create a newspaper, using as a basis any of the paperbacks read either as a class or by the students individually.

I divided the class into four groups with an appointed editor-in-chief for each group. I also assigned the students to the various groups; I tried to keep the talent and ability of each group comparable. The only ground rules were that every article in the finished paper had to be drawn from a paperback book read by the students during the school year and that each paper should have at least one example of each type of article listed on the mimeographed sheet. From this point I was available to give advice and to lend a helping hand when necessary. I circulated among the groups and found them listing books read and the types of articles which could be taken from each. The student editors were setting deadlines, and the work on the papers was in progress.

Enthusiasm was pervasive. Much of the work went on in secret, as each group wanted to write something different. Tension mounted as the deadline for turning in the work approached. It would have been difficult to convince an outsider that the class was just finishing a project on book reports.

Finally the day arrived when the newspapers hit the newsstand (my desk). The results exceeded my greatest expectation. The finished product had either been typed or printed to give it a newspaper look. The headlines vied with anything that I had seen as attention getters. Here are a few examples:

"Pauper Prince Reigns While
Prince Edward Roams in Rags" from *The Prince and the Pauper*

"Severe Drought Strikes Africa" from *Jamie*

"Dikes Break, 5 Dead,
Many Missing" from *When the Dikes Broke*

"Hoods Turn Basketball Players" from *The 23rd Street Crusaders*

"Foreign Domain Begun and
Ended by Determined Animals" from *Animal Farm*

I found that the students were able to use the same book for several different types of articles. *Julie's Heritage* served in one paper as the basis for a general news story, for a personality story, and for an editorial on prejudice. This variety was repeated in every paper and showed me that the students were able to see the book from various points of view.

The versatility of the students was further revealed when they added features to their newspapers, a category which had not been covered in our discussion about the original mimeographed sheet. I found advice columns geared to some of the problems found in the books. One paper based a weather report on *The Big Wave*. Another added a theater advertisement section to the paper by copying the advertising style for coming movie attractions. They used titles of books that had been made into films (*Old Yeller, The Yearling*). I discovered latent artistic talent in illustrations accompanying the stories. One paper included an obituary column listing people and animals that had died during the course of the book. Another devised a crossword puzzle from a book on space.

I found that most groups had used twenty to twenty-five books as the basis for their newspaper. I was happy to see that among these were many worthwhile titles not found in our general literature program. This meant that many students had read or were reading books I would like to see all students read, and they were doing it on their own!

Up to this point, the students in each group had talked over the books they were using as their contributions to the paper. They had discussed the contents of the books and the way each could be used to best advantage in the group's paper. This part of the assignment then had permitted a limited sharing by each student.

But now I stepped into widen this sharing opportunity. I divided the class into their original groups and then gave each group a paper done by another group. They examined the paper for the following: number of different books covered in the paper, different types of news articles written, books covered that they were unfamiliar with, and the general makeup of the paper. The editor-in-chief then gave an oral report to the class, discussing the findings of his group as they pertained to the paper examined. (This could be carried a step further if several English classes did the same assignment. One class could examine the papers of another.)

What is my assessment of the unit? It was a tremendous success. The students had a direct tie-in with a classroom unit and their reading experiences. For once they had an opportunity to look at books in a different way. They had an opportunity to become excited about a book and let this excitement seep into a class project. The students were able to make individual contributions to a project, and at the same time they learned that wholehearted effort is needed by each member of a group in order to complete a task.

The work proved to me that students are reading more than ever. Students like to do things that are different, and they can become enthusiastic about their work. Readers do become salesmen if the right opportunity presents itself. Students can take an idea, expand it, and improve it. They can make the classroom an exciting place.

A look at the contemporary theatre: theatre and anti-theatre

AILEEN R. HENDERSON

If Jerome S. Bruner's hypothesis ". . . that any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form"[1] is correct, then it should follow that in English 12 academically talented students ought to be able to investigate the contemporary theatre—even the Theatre of the Absurd—to find the great issues, principles, and values that reflect modern society and reveal the contemporary image of man. Furthermore, intelligent seniors ought to be able to analyze the verbal and artistic structuring of these ideas and to realize that a work of art is, to a great extent, an aesthetically formed structure. To test Bruner's thesis and to satisfy a definite urge to bring some of the avant-garde dramatic literature to the high school classroom, I have developed a unit on drama from Henrik Ibsen through the Theatre of the Absurd and have used it successfully the last two years with academically talented seniors.

Since the material in the drama unit is fresh, new, and different to the students, the introduction to the study should be bright and attractive with theatre programs of Broadway plays, clippings from leading newspapers, colorful pictures from dramatic magazines, and headlines of absurdities in modern life. New paperback copies of current plays and drama books should line the bookshelves or be displayed on a portable book truck that also contains class sets of Henrik Ibsen's plays. The teacher's introductory talk should include a brief overview of the unit and should relate to bulletin board displays and modern plays exhibited in the room. Listening a few minutes to selections from records of such unusual plays as *Krapp's Last Tape* and Bob Dylan's creations soon prepares the way for an exciting discovery—something different to do and something new to read and to discuss.

---

[1] Jerome S. Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 32.

With interested students it is easy for the teacher to explain the inductive approach to the study of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. He explains that each student must read and study the play carefully with no help from literary criticism or from other sources; that he must analyze the protagonist and the main ideas of the play; and that he must write his own conclusions and bring them to the teacher before the class starts the discussion of the play. He issues paperback copies of Iben's plays and starts the students on a new adventure.

After two days of reading and writing, each student hands in his conclusions and then participates in the class discussion. Ibsen's controversial protagonist, retrospective exposition, and ambiguity in *An Enemy of the People* provide at least two class periods of animated discussion and debate. After the class discussion of the ideas of the play, students are given a study sheet to reexamine the ideas and structure and to revise their first conclusions, which have only comments written on them by the teacher. Students keep their revised conclusions on Ibsen in their notebooks and then continue their inductive approach in the study of *The Wild Duck*, which they compare with *An Enemy of the People*.

For variety, three students present a symposium of *A Doll's House* before the class members ask questions or challenge views presented by the speakers. At this time, the teacher, who has been asking questions only, now may begin to make a few comments on Ibsen's style and ideas. Students discuss the new social problems Ibsen presents in his plays and read *Hedda Gabler* or *Ghosts*. After the students have read and taken notes on four of Ibsen's plays, they may read literary criticism on Ibsen. The students now examine the critics' views and compare them with their own. Then each student invents a thesis and develops a carefully written essay in which he defends his thesis. During this study of Ibsen the students learn many necessary words and terms dealing with drama (curtain scenes, antecedent action, exposition, incentive moment, rising and falling action, dénouement, linear plot, protagonist, antagonist, social drama, tragicomedy, tragedy, "mass man," soliloquy, and others the teacher can introduce).

Since formal evaluation is a vital part of the learning process, each student brings to class all his notes and conclusions concerning Ibsen the day the test will be given. He is asked to evaluate in essay form his inductive study of Henrik Ibsen's plays. He may use his notes and a dictionary to create an essay that is intended to reveal his strengths and weaknesses in critical thinking. No grades have been given on any written material has been handed in; the teacher has written only comments intended to stimulate critical thinking and to encourage ex-

tensive reading and close analysis of plays. The evaluative essay, notes on plays, weekly reading lists, and spirited class discussion reflect extensive and intensive reading, conceptual learning, and highly motivated students.

Before the study of August Strindberg, each student is given a reading list and a study sheet of Northrop Frye's "Theory of Modes." He is encouraged to see every good play in the community or on television and to read articles on modern drama. He will continue to make a list each week of all his reading and will add to this list his cultural activities. Newspaper and magazine reviews of dramas, theatre programs, and newspaper notices of absurdities should be brought in for the bulletin boards. Each student adds every possible piece of information about contemporary drama, art, and music to his new concepts of drama. It is helpful for the teacher to provide lectures and symposia on modern art and music while the students are reading assigned plays and are doing independent reading.

Since August Strindberg's life is reflected in his plays and since the deductive approach to learning can be used effectively with the study of Strindberg, the students start with Strindberg's life and his association with Ibsen. This biographical information may be brought by the instructor, by a drama teacher, or by research by students before the class reads and discusses *The Father*. The students are asked to relate this play of Strindberg's life and his fear of domination by women and also to examine the protagonist and the theme of suffering. They are required to read literary criticism and to check the assumption that Strindberg's play was an answer to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. They examine Nietzsche's views after two or three students have presented a symposium on Nietzsche. The class will discuss *The Father* and search for Nietzsche's views. Again each student draws his own conclusions and keeps them in his notebook to use in class discussions and in his essay writing.

Students who have studied Strindberg's *Easter* present a panel to the class. Students participate in the forum which follows the panel. The teacher leads the class to compare and to contrast the protagonists in Ibsen's and Strindberg's plays, to place the protagonists in the proper era according to Northrop Frye's cycle, and to examine the traditional and newer devices used in modern drama. The students also read and examine the ideas and structure in *The Ghost Sonata* or *Miss Julie*. The teacher leads the discussion in these difficult plays and also helps the students in their examination of expressionism and surrealism in art and drama. Each student conceives and invents a thesis concerning Strindberg's plays and develops this thesis. He may defend it or attack

it in a well written essay. For formal evaluation of Strindberg, the teacher may give a test or may have each student prepare in outline form the basic ideas and structure found in the plays that he has read. The report should include a bibliography of all materials studied.

With this background of Ibsen's and Strindberg's modern realism, the students are now ready to investigate inductively the contemporary drama. For independent reading the students are urged to read plays by Anton Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill, and Thornton Wilder before the class starts with Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. They have been asked to take notes on the ideas and structure of each play read. They must not use any literary criticism until each has developed his own conclusions on *Waiting for Godot*. The class follows the same inductive process used for Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. After the reading and class discussion of this play, the teacher lectures on Samuel Beckett and the eclectic technique used in *Waiting for Godot*. Each student is given a study sheet to use in reading the play a second time. He is asked to read any criticism he can find on Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd. A second class discussion of *Waiting for Godot* brings in the Noh drama of Japan with its two characters (the *waki* and the *shite*), its philosophy of the brevity and vanity of human existence, and its use of pivot words (words used in two senses); the device of prolonged silences used by the Greek dramatist Aeschylus; the expectation of a *deus ex machina* and the use of a messenger from the Greek drama; the medieval morality play; the device of a play within a play used by Seneca and Shakespeare; and the technique of improvisation from the Italian *commedia dell 'arte*. Beckett's eclectic technique opens up many avenues for independent and group study of various ideas and techniques used by Eugene Ionesco, Bertolt Brecht, Edward Albee, T. S. Eliot, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Friederick Durrenmatt, and others. The class studies *Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco and enjoys a stage reading of Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*. Other suggested activities include a study of words and terms connected with modern drama (circular plot, Noh drama, ironic hero, ambiguity, anti-play, anti-hero, avant-garde, situation dramas, iconoclasts, epic theatre, dramatic theatre, theatricality, existentialism).

The unit may be concluded with a further look at the contemporary theatre. Students may write research papers on such topics as the following: the epic theatre in relation to Bertolt Brecht; expressionism in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, Rice's *The Adding Machine*, and Kaufman's *The Beggar on Horseback*; family life as reflected in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, and Williams'

The Glass Menagerie; Strindberg's influence on Eugene O'Neill, Bernard Shaw, Tennessee Williams, Eugene Ionesco. If the research paper is not required, the teacher may evaluate each student's progress in critical thinking by examining notes taken on the plays read for independent study. Perhaps the most meaningful culminating activity is for each student to write an essay on the great issues and values that reveal the contemporary image of man.

No formal evaluation in this unit is really necessary. The excitement generated by students' exploring new ideas in a different way is proof enough ". . . that any subject can be taught to any child in some honest form."

Some Views of Northrop Frye's "Theory of Modes"

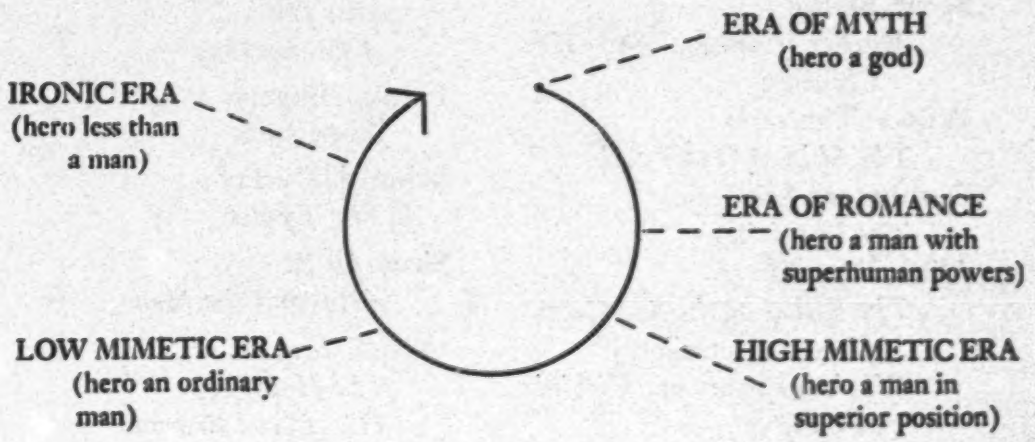
Objectives:

1. To introduce the concept of literary history
2. To illuminate the study of the hero

Brief statement of theory:

Frye's theory divides literature into eras differentiated from one another by the type of hero that is predominant in each period. The progress from one mode to the next is a cyclical movement that begins with the myth and works back toward it.

A simple diagram of Frye's cycle:[2]



[2] Sister M. Bettina, SSND, "Teaching Frye's Theory of Modes," *English Journal*, LIV (February 1965), 124-125.

Frye's pre-generic forms (four modes):[8]

1. If the action involves trial and triumph, *comedy* results.
2. If it involves trial plus significant personal change plus triumph, the mode is *romance*.
3. If it involves trial, insight, and defeat, *tragedy* is the mode.
4. If it requires trial and defeat without insight, the mode is *irony*.

N.B. For further information on Frye's views, one may refer to Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

Reading List for Students

Selected Common Readings for the Unit

Ibsen, Henrik
- *An Enemy of the People*
- *The Wild Duck*
- *A Doll's House*

Book of Job

Ionesco, Eugene
- *The Bald Soprano*
- *Rhinoceros*

Strindberg, August
- *The Father*
- *Easter*
- *The Ghost Sonata*

Beckett, Samuel
- *Waiting for Godot*

MacLeish, Archibald
- *J. B.*

Additional Reading for Independent Study

Ibsen, Henrik
- *Hedda Gabler*
- *Ghosts*

Becht, Bertolt
- *Mother Courage and Her Children*

Wilder, Thornton
- *The Skin of Our Teeth*

Durrenmatt, Friederick
- *The Physicists*

Albee, Edward
- *The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* [Carson McCullers]
- *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
- *The Zoo Story*

Bellow, Saul
- *The Dangling Man*

Strindberg, August
- *Miss Julie*
- *A Dream Play*

Ionesco, Eugene
- *The Chairs*

Schisgal, Murray
- *The Typist*

Shaw, G. B.
- *Arms and the Man*

O'Neill, Eugene
- *The Hairy Ape*
- *Great God Brown*
- *Emperor Jones*

---

[8] *A Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12* (Eugene, Oregon: The Oregon Curriculum Study Center, 1964), pp. 1-23.

Eliot, T. S.
Murder in the Cathedral
The Cocktail Party
Sophocles
Oedipus the King
Antigone
Aeschylus
Oresteia
Richardson, Jack
The Prodigal
Williams, Tennessee
The Glass Menagerie
Rice, Elmer
The Adding Machine
Besier, Rudolf
The Barretts of Wimpole Street
Bronte, Charlotte
Jane Eyre
Chekhov, Anton
The Cherry Orchard
The Sea Gull
The Three Sisters
Anouilh, Jean
Becket
Antigone
McCullers, Carson
The Member of the Wedding
The Ballad of the Sad Cafe
Euripides
Medea
Miller, Arthur
Death of a Salesman
Sartre, Jean-Paul
No Exit
Kaufman, George
The Beggar on Horseback
Bolt, Robert
A Man for All Seasons
Butler, Samuel
Erewhon
Huxley, Aldous
Brave New World
Orwell, George
1984

Study Questions

Waiting for Godot

(To be used when you read the play)

1. Is this play a parable of life? Of death? Is it a Christian allegory or an existential tragicomedy? Is there any suggestion of atonement and of the scapegoat in this play? Are any ideas in the play similar to Jeremiah's ideas? To Job's views? Are any ideas related to Ecclesiastes or to Romans, Chapter 8? What is the significance of the reference to the two thieves on the cross with Jesus?
2. How is the play related to the Noh drama (Japanese)?
3. What are the main problems in the play? For what are the characters searching? Who is Godot? Does Godot represent life, death, a job, a person, a place, a thing? Or what?
4. What is the significance of waiting in the play? Of suicide? What is the symbolism of the tree, the hat, the boots? Is this a

tree of life? A tree of reason? Of reality? Of the meaning of life? Are there other symbols in the play? What about the tramps? Who are they? Are they types or individuals? Why four different nationalities? What relationships are there in the play?

5. What is the purpose of playing games, of constant talking, of repetition of ideas and situations?
6. How much time does the play cover? Why are there leaves on the tree in Act II?
7. What kind of plot (action)? Is there cause and effect?
8. Is the play related to the dance and/or to music?
9. What is the significance of the same words at the end of Act I and Act II? Why do different tramps ask the same question: "Well, shall we go?"
10. Can you interpret Lucky's monologue, or can you explain its purpose in the play?
11. What kind of language does Beckett use? What is the effect of the pause (silence)?
12. What things are different about Beckett's protagonists? Examine one carefully. Is he helpless? Is he innocent, or does he have a sense of guilt? Is he suffering incomprehensible? Is he ignorant or intelligent? Does he abnegate his responsibility?
13. Why do some critics call this play a tragicomedy? A tragic farce? Or can it be called a tragedy? A comedy?

An Annotated Bibliography

A Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12. Eugene, Oregon: The Oregon Curriculum Study Center, 1964, pp. 1-23.
New ideas presented here are valuable in the teaching of literature.

Arkansas Language Arts Guide Grades 7 through 12. Little Rock, Arkansas: State Department of Education, 1962.
This publication is valuable for goals for students and for skills to be emphasized.

Barnes, Hazel E. *The Literature of Possibility.* Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1959.
For the teacher who desires to do research on the contemporary theatre, this book is an erudite source.

Bentley, Eric. *What Is Theatre?* Boston: Beacon Press, 1956.

This book of essays on literary criticism of modern drama will be helpful to the teacher. The theatre reviews have a "flavor of the *New Yorker* and *The New Republic*."

Brother DePaul, C.F.X. "Bergman and Strindberg," *College English*, XXVI (May 1965), 620-630.

The entire issue deals with many phases of drama such as the "Closet Drama Approach," the "Figural Approach," and some ideas of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Bruner, Jerome S. *The Process of Education.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Every teacher should become familiar with Bruner's ideas on the spiral curriculum.

Brustein, Robert. *The Theatre of Revolt.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964.

Both students and the teacher will find this book to be valuable in the study of the drama from Ibsen through Genet.

"Creative Approaches to the Teaching of English," *Journal of Education* (December 1964), published by Boston University School of Education, Boston, Mass.

The entire issue is helpful in developing an instructional unit.

Duerr, Edwin. *The Length and Depth of Acting.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.

Dr. Samuel Hirsch of Boston University recommends this book for background study in the drama. Part IV gives excellent explanation of the mass-culture century.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Every English teacher should be aware of Frye's ideas concerning literature.

Gassner, John. *Masters of the Drama.* New York: Dover Publications, 1954.

This book is a source book on the drama from early Greece through Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller of the twentieth century. The school library will need several copies for students to use.

Gassner, John. *The Theatre in Our Times.* New York: Crown Publishers, 1954.

Each teacher should own this book and see that each school library

has two or three copies for students to use. It is an excellent source for this unit.

Guth, Hans P. *English Today and Tomorrow.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964.

This new book is a valuable one for every teacher to use in teaching and in preparing instructional units.

Hoffman, Frederick J. *Samuel Beckett: The Language of Self.* New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1964.

The teacher will find helpful material in this paperback edition. The explanation of the "Underground Man" is one key to the understanding of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Jacobsen, Josephine and W. R. Mueller. *The Testament of Samuel Beckett.* New York: A Dramabook, Hill and Wang, 1964.

This study of Samuel Beckett is helpful to the teacher in teaching *Waiting for Godot.*

Kenner, Hugh. *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study.* New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961.

The teacher will realize that Samuel Beckett has much to offer the intelligent thinker. Much of the material is too difficult for high school seniors.

Lambert, R. F. "An Enemy of the People: A Friend of the Teacher," *English Journal,* LIV (October 1965), 626-628.

This article is thought provoking and somewhat contrary to many critical views.

Levy, Alan. "The Long Wait for Godot," *Theatre Arts* (August 1956), pp. 33-35.

The material in this article can be used for the study of Samuel Beckett. The interesting facts of the first performance of *Waiting for Godot* interest teacher and students.

Pronko, Leonard C. *Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1964.

Any teacher who uses this unit will need the discussions and explanations of the modern theatre that are given here.

Rowe, Kenneth Thorpe. *A Theater in Your Head.* New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1960.

This book is a good reference for some assignments in this unit. It can be used effectively by the teacher.

Sister M. Bettina, SSND. "Teaching Frye's Theory of Modes," *English Journal*, LIV (February 1965), 124-125.

The explanation of Frye's theory is concise and most helpful as an introduction to Northrop Frye's book.

Teaching Literature in Wisconsin: Wisconsin English Language Arts Project. Madison, Wisconsin: Department of Public Instruction, 1965.

The suggestions for teaching literature are helpful.

Willett, John. *The Theater of Bertolt Brecht*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions Books, 1959.

For an excellent background of a major dramatist of the contemporary era, the teacher and students should use this excellent book.

Any answer is acceptable—if suggested through words or mood: a tip for teaching poetry

ETHEL K. HARTE

In teaching poetry, we tend to overwhelm students with the difficulties of communication between poet and reader. "Who is speaking? To whom? What is the tone?" The student who goes astray in his responses may be left frustrated, or worse yet, wary of *any* ventures into interpretation.

A poem like Walter De La Mare's "The Listeners" is the perfect antidote for the class that "how soon unaccountable" has become tired and sick. Here the author himself wanted the reader to supply his own interpretation of a situation made vague and eerie to *encourage* imaginative reactions.

I ask students to listen to the poem—to read it several times, thoughtfully, and then to write out one or more interpretations that occur to them, with the phrases that seem to point to their meanings. The list grows each year and is read aloud to the class *after* the discussion.

Briefly stated, the following interpretations have been given, usually supported by several students:

1. Theme of death.
   a. Living want to know about the next world.
   b. Dead wish to return to the world of the living, to communicate or to keep a promise to return.
2. Search for lost youth.
3. Pledge being kept—perhaps as simple as a dare to visit a haunted house.
4. Interim of a suicide, as in *Outward Bound*, with real life suspended before actual death.
5. Spy theme—an agent keeps his promise, but finds no one to take his message.
6. Christ theme—with the world not ready to be saved.
7. A lost and frightened traveler.
8. A forgetful man is keeping his promise, but too late—perhaps arriving on the wrong date.
9. A world of dreams.
10. Perplexed humanity, stubbornly questioning and probing—outer space?
11. The outsider or rebel in an alien world.
12. Man vs. apathy, as he tries to develop new concepts.
13. Warning of doom—judgment day.
14. Desire for immortality.

Everyone in the class becomes a listener and contributes to the interpretation of the poem when "The Listeners" is presented as a challenge, with *any* answer acceptable *if suggested through words or mood.*

A humanities course in the high school

HENRIETTE N. ALOVIS

A humanities course in the twelfth grade could well be the capstone of a high school education, an education which all too often is fragmented into forty-five or fifty-minute segments of prescribed courses. Upon entrance into high school, students are fitted often with educational blinders, and their peripheral vision frequently becomes restricted as they run the four-year course. Opportunities to cross interdisciplinary areas are limited, and it is difficult to see the relationships of one subject to another in the average high school. For students who seldom understand that they are products of previous cultures and molders of future societies, a twelfth year course that brings together the learnings of the past four years has value.

In 1965, the two high schools in the Pascack Valley Regional High School District, Pascack Hills High School and Pascack Valley High School, introduced an elective course in the humanities to seniors, both college and employment bound. The course encompasses an examination of significant periods in the development of Western civilization which have shaped our Western heritage and culture. Students study the literature, philosophy, history, art, and music of these periods. The course provides a thoughtful analysis of questions which perturb the twentieth century individual as he searches for an identity, a *modus vivendi*, in a world which is changing with stunning rapidity. The aim of this course in the humanities at Pascack is not to provide definitive answers but rather to analyze, to explore, and to investigate our literature, our philosophy, our history, our art, and our music—all reflections of man's thoughts and aspirations.

The periods under investigation at our high schools are the Graeco-Roman period with background material on the pre-Hellenic influences on this period; the Renaissance with background material on the medieval period; the Age of Enlightenment with background on the Reformation; the twentieth century and the individual's search for identity in what Auden has called "the age of anxiety."

There are four teachers involved in this most natural of all team-teaching situations. At the beginning of the study of each period, one of two approaches is taken to give orientation to and background for the era under investigation. Either there are four separate orientation lectures, with opportunity for students' questions, in each of the humanities disciplines, or else the team meets the class together and selects major themes from the period and discusses them and their application to the various disciplines. In this manner, the students see the overlap of the various humanities subjects clearly. If the lectures are given individually, reference is made continually to other team members' presentations. Another concept which is stressed is "There is continuity in change," as John Ciardi has indicated. The team members keep this idea before the students—that as students of the humanities, they will see the validity of the previous statement from their vantage point as twentieth century citizens.

After the presentations are made, the students are assigned a common reading for each period with additional seminar work in various other readings. As examples, the common readings have been Plato's "Lysis, or Friendship," Montaigne's "Friendship" from his *Essays*, Voltaire's *Candide*, and Malraux's *Man's Fate*. Seminar readings have included Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Euripides' *The Trojan Women*, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Homer's *Aeneid*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, selected portions of the King James Bible, excerpts from Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Brecht's *Mother Courage*, Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Camus' *No Exit*, Albee's *American Dream* and *Zoo Story*, Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and MacLeish's *J. B.*

An important aspect of the humanities program at Pascack is the independent study program which is an integral part of the course. Students are required to submit four projects during the year. They have a wide variety of projects from which to choose in each area of the humanities. The only stipulation, however, is that the students must select one project from each of the various humanities disciplines. These projects may be done individually or as group projects with other students in the class. The student is evaluated on each of these four projects by his adviser, who is one of the team members, according to the field the student has selected. One day a week is devoted to independent study; in addition, students are issued independent study passes

to free them from their study halls to work in the library or the music and art studios. There they plan, organize, and work on their projects. These projects, after ten-week periods, are presented to the other students in the course.

Typical examples of the projects assigned for the Graeco-Roman period have been:

> Select a scene from one of the following tragedies: *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, or *The Trojan Woman* by Euripides. Prepare the scene to be performed in our amphitheatre, paying special attention to the authenticity of the staging. Compare and/or contrast, also, the twentieth century concept of tragedy with the ancient Greek concept. To support your views, you may wish to read or compare a scene from some twentieth century works by Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, or Arthur Miller. You may wish, also, to read Arthur Miller's view of what constitutes tragic characters and situations in our society.

In conjunction with this literature and philosophy project assignment, an art project might be, "Create performance masks in the spirit of the Greek tragedy. These may be used in conjunction with a performance in our amphitheatre. A variety of materials may be used." A history project in connection with the two cited above might be, "Check the historical authenticity of the Greek tragedies under consideration for performance by the groups working in the literature, philosophy, and art projects."

Students' projects resulting from assignments given during the study of the Renaissance period have been "A Comparison of More's *Utopia* and Karl Marx's Philosophy," "A Demonstration and Performance of Renaissance Music and Dance," "Heraldry and Its Significance and Symbolism," "An Iconoclast Appraises Thomas Becket," "Influence of Renaissance Fashions on Twentieth Century Fashions," "The Art of Bosch and Breughel and Its Relationship to Modern Painting," "*Paradise Lost* and the Fall of Man," "The Mass in Music from the Renaissance to the Twentieth Century," and "Historical Sources for Three Plays by William Shakespeare."

The evaluative criteria for this course are not based on written tests and work, but are based primarily on preparation for and presentation of seminar work, classroom discussion of common readings, and the depth and scope of the students' projects.

After two years of coordinating and participating in the program, I can say that this type of humanities program has merit and relevancy in a high school. Students become deeply concerned with discovering the essence and the relationship of ideas rather than in the gathering of inert facts. They develop scholarly competence and social awareness

as a result of dealing with meaningful concepts and values. They are shown that a piece of literature, a work of art, and a musical composition acquire deeper meaning in a historical context and continuum. The course affords students who may enter rigid vocational programs in college or those students who may not attend college the beginnings of a liberal arts experience. These students are given a variety of educational experiences such as lectures in large groups and work in small discussion groups or seminars, and they are part of an independent study program where they do intensive research and work in areas of their own interests. Above all else, the prime purposes of a course in the humanities is to arouse an interest in the humanities as providing experiences valuable for their own sake and to help students put aside for a while their competitive attitudes towards earning a living and thus to develop a more contemplative attitude toward being alive and aware of the human condition.

Literature and writing

JOHN J. HASSETT

About five years ago when I was correcting a set of final examination papers, I was impressed by the insights into a poem that were revealed by one of the students. Then I tried to recall how frequently this student had contributed to class discussions. I couldn't recall a single instance. While other less gifted members of the class had occupied time and attention during discussion periods, this shy young lady had sat quietly in her seat and listened, but she had not shared her insights with us. I wondered if I could find some way to help her and others like her to share their ideas with other class members.

Normally, at the first session of the class in dramatic literature—we met for a two-hour session each Saturday—I would assign the text and the plays we would study at each session. The first play usually assigned for reading was *Antigone*. The students would read the play during the week, and we would proceed to the discussion of *Antigone* on the following Saturday. In my new plan, however, we would proceed with the reading as usual, but at the next session each student would submit to the teacher a *written* evaluation of some phase of *Antigone*. The evaluation was limited to a single paragraph. The discussion would not take place at the second session but would be postponed until the third session to give the instructor a chance to consider the student evaluations.

How did the plan work? From the beginning there were difficulties, but there were also rewards. Some of the students as usual wrote too many words expressing frequently too few ideas. The solution? The instructor read only the first paragraph and assigned the grade on the basis of that paragraph alone. Some of the students neglected to hand in the assignment. The solution? These students were required to hand in a detailed outline of the play listing all the major characters and all the major incidents. This latter paper was to be checked but not corrected or graded. Some of the students went through the motions of writing their paragraph without helping themselves or their classmates. The solution? This was, after all, a required class. The only hope was that

the example of more gifted and more energetic students would inspire some of their uninterested and uninteresting classmates to improve as the term went on.

There was some improvement. During the week I read the student evaluations. They did not reveal some of the insights I was hoping to find. Some of the insights the students did find both surprised and delighted me. Moreover, it was possible to provoke discussion by contrast. Sometimes, even, our very bashful girl would rise to the defense of her point of view and be pleasantly surprised at the respect with which others listened to her. In general the discussion was more controlled, the statements were more thoughtfully and more exactly phrased, and some of the shy students made valuable contributions to the discussions.

My first step in preparing for the class was always to reread the play. This was followed by studying my notes from previous terms. Finally I read the student comments. Contributions that were obviously ordinary and commonplace could be discarded at once, but frequently even some of these would contain a sentence that might provoke others to discussion. For instance, there was the anguished question asked by a young man who obviously did not understand or care to understand the burial customs of Antigone's day, "Why must I bother with the burial problems of ancient Greece? Don't we have enough of our own problems today?" After reading all of the papers, I arranged them in an order suitable for discussion, taking, for instance, all the comments about characterization first and all the comments about plot last. (Later in the term the class was divided into groups and each group was assigned the evaluation of one aspect of the play. Group 1 would evaluate the plot, Group 2 dialogue, Group 3 characterization, and Group 4 dramatic highlights. The following week the assignments would be rotated.) These comments I read aloud in class, preserving the anonymity of the contributor. Sometimes the student would rise to the defense of his own position, but at other times he would remain silent, having already changed his position after hearing the opinions of others.

Theoretically the students were to prepare for class in the following way: First, they were to read the play, staging it as much as possible in their own imaginations. Next, each was to form his own opinion. Did he like the play or did he dislike it? Why? Finally the student was to prepare to write. What did he find in the play (or the plot or the characterization) that he was inspired to communicate to others? Each student was to seek one insight into life (if any) that the author had presented. The comment was supposed to be forceful, carefully worded, and organized into a well-developed paragraph about 150 words in length. Com-

monplace remarks would receive a grade of *C* or less. If even one of the sentences could be used in the class discussion, the student could earn a *B* on the paper provided he met the standards of written English. If the entire paper was above average in content and expression, it would be read in its entirety in class and earn the writer a grade of *A*, provided of course that it met the standards of written English.

What were some of the disadvantages of the plan? First, it meant more work for the instructor. If there were forty or more students in the class, the instructor had to read forty or more student assignments each week. Moreover, the plan meant more work for the students. In addition to the time required for reading the play and for taking notes, students had to take time to reflect and then to organize and to express their views. Finally, there was a longer than usual time interval between the reading and the discussion. A student might, for instance, read a play on March 5, submit his evaluation on March 12, and discuss the play on March 19.

There were also obvious advantages. Instruction in writing continued through the first two years in college at relatively little cost to student and instructor. Pupils were forced to look for their own insights into plays—and some found them—before the instructor presented his views. The discussions were generally more stimulating, because much of the discussion was devoted to problems raised by the students themselves. When student evaluations failed to consider important aspects of the play, the instructor made sure that these became a part of the discussion. The comments of the students were more selective than in ordinary discussions because the ideas discussed were more carefully weighed and more carefully worded. It was also easier for the instructor to control discussion.

In the following terms the method was applied with modification to introductory courses in poetry and prose literature. In poetry, for instance, when the class was studying the sonnet, many sonnets would be assigned for the weekly session, but sonnets by Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth might be assigned to three different teams of writers. These sonnets would then receive detailed attention in class using the students' own reactions. If the consideration of any one or two or three of these poems occupied the entire discussion period, the remaining poems that had been assigned were passed over temporarily, but they did form part of the content of the midterm and the final examinations.

In the introductory course in prose literature, the method was also used, but again with modifications. In the course we considered the essay, the short story, the novel, and the short novel. Again the class

was divided into writing teams. Each week each student turned in an assignment on an essay or a short story or a novel. The following week the assignments were rotated so that during the term each student had evaluated at least four essays and four short stories. In addition, at least four assignments would have been devoted to a section of a long novel or a complete short novel.

Here are some of the comments made by some average and some above average students on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

1. Conrad has mixed a cocktail of horrors throwing into the story a bit of everything from cannibalism to witchcraft. The details are so vivid the author seems to be recalling past experience.
2. Kurtz has turned his back on God to pursue devilish ways. He is a colonialist who came to teach, enlighten and uplift the "savage" but who remained to satisfy his greed for wealth and his lust for power.
3. This was one of the most tedious assignments all term. The dialogue within dialogue, the constant shifting of scene, and the lack of continuity in action were most confusing. This book was difficult.
4. Conrad's character description was superb. I came to know even the two women who were knitting in the doctor's office and the accountant in the jungle who was so meticulous about his clothing and his appearance.
5. The number and diversity of images, the elaborate descriptions, and the adjectival excesses disturbed me at times. However, I found reading this work a rich and rewarding experience.
6. Conrad had me hypnotized. I could smell the rotten hippo meat of the cannibals and feel the eyes of the natives peering at me from behind the jungle foliage.
7. Conrad himself said that the result of his voyage to the Congo was "a long, long illness and a very dismal convalescence." The story was to me both depressing and frustrating.
8. This story of a civilized man who reverts to savagery was superb.
9. At first I found the work wordy and boring. Later I was fascinated. Kurtz, not the jungle, was dark and dangerous. He was an utterly debased man, obsessed with witchcraft and the victim of his own uncontrollable passions.

These student comments from an average class in a required English course seem to me better than average. Moreover, the reactions provoked by some of the opinions led to a lively, interesting, and, I hope, rewarding class discussion.

It is always difficult to evaluate the success or failure of a teaching method. This method appeared to me to be successful in required classes. It seemed to me that more students kept up with the reading week by week instead of saving much of their reading until the night before the examination, as sometimes happens in basic courses. It seemed to

me that students learned to formulate their own opinions about a literary selection before they heard what the instructor thought. Moreover, they developed a certain amount of confidence in their own evaluations when they observed the respect which other students and the instructor accorded their work. Finally, the students learned the value of written communication—the importance of saying something meaningful in language as forceful as they could command. It seemed to me that the plan helped non-English majors interpret literature and express their ideas about it.

Concern: to discover the value of additional personal attention for pupils by limiting teacher load to 100 students

VINCENT P. SKINNER

A deepening concern with the current practices and directions in the teaching of English in the public schools of this community necessitated new directions. For some time the independent schools had developed teaching materials and programs which radically deviate from the materials and programs in the public schools. The main concern of the Phillips Exeter-Salem High English Project has been to discover the degree to which an independent school's methods, if and when modified, are transferable to a public secondary school.

To accomplish this goal, the Project Committee established the following guidelines: (1) the teaching schedule of Salem High English teachers be limited to four sections of 25 students; (2) no formal teaching of grammar and parts of speech as an end in itself; rather students would study usage and structural problems as they occur in their own writing; (3) writing, an integral part of the Project, would be drawn directly from the students' readings and/or personal experiences; the act of writing should occur frequently and short direct papers would be preferred to longer ones; (4) each teacher would have additional free time for individual student conferences; (5) the teaching of outlining techniques would be abandoned in favor of the study of structure

from the writing itself; (6) students would study vocabulary from selected readings rather than from prepared lists of words having no relevancy to the materials under consideration; (7) book reports per se would be omitted to allow more time for closer reading, with emphasis on *quality* reading; (8) the traditional anthologies would be replaced by selected novels, plays, short stories, and poetry in paperback editions. Frequently the anthologies fail to provide any relevancy to students' experiences; by selecting paperback editions, a student's need for a full vicarious experience can be more fully realized. This aspect of the Project is especially important, if anthologies fail to reflect the socioeconomic backgrounds from which the students come. The Project involves the students in the process of reading and writing, a process which is not only continuous but also sequential.

Now that the Project is in its second year, Salem High School has noticed some significant changes in both student and teacher attitudes. Those involved feel that there is greater impetus and direction; the flexibility of the Project permits new and fresh ideas. Both the Academy and Salem High have gained a greater understanding of and appreciation for the teaching of English and for the problems involved. Perhaps one of the most revealing insights is the idea that *no one school or one person* has all the answers to questions about methodology. Above all, with mutual sharing and exploration come alternate possibilities, but these possibilities are valueless unless given the opportunity for implementation, which is precisely what the Project does. Now the teaching of English becomes what it should be—dynamic, relevant, and changing.

II. WRITING

Audrey J. Roth is Assistant Professor
of English, Miami-Dade Junior College

Thelma C. Altshuler is Associate Professor
of Humanities, Miami-Dade Junior College

Harvey Wilkes is a Teacher of English,
Harry A. Eiseman Junior High School,
Brooklyn, New York

Neal Resnikoff is an Instructor of English,
Wisconsin State University, Eau Claire

E. Graham Ward is Chairman of the
English Department, Brooks School,
North Andover, Massachusetts

Raymond Hollman is an Experienced Teacher Fellow
in English Education, University of Illinois, Urbana,
and formerly Chairman of the English Department,
O'Fallon Township High School, O'Fallon, Illinois

Dorothy Lambert is an Instructor in English,
Nazareth College, Nazareth, Michigan
(Former Teacher of English, Roslyn High School,
Roslyn, L. I., New York)

Robert G. Lambert is an Instructor of English,
Western Michigan University

Michael Grady is Associate Professor,
San Jose State College

Verona F. Rothenbush is a Teacher at
Starling Junior High School,
Columbus, Ohio

Lois W. Parker is Assistant Professor of
English, Southwestern University

Diane Weissberger is a Member of the
English Department, Germantown
High School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Highly structured writing assignments

AUDREY J. ROTH AND THELMA C. ALTSHULER

The age of the fill-in blank, so prevalent from direct mail advertisements to the Internal Revenue Service forms, does not encourage the free flow of ideas. English teachers can respond to this fact either through frustrated despair or through willingness to turn the blank to their advantage. By using a highly structured blank in remedial writing classes at the college level, we have been able to develop the best compositions these students have ever written—compositions written almost in spite of themselves.

Ordinarily, a student stares at a blank sheet of paper and wonders how he is going to begin a composition. If he starts writing, he often goes in circles, repeating in several different ways the first thing he wrote down. He does not usually realize that the teacher expects a great deal of preparation before the first word is written, the kind of preparation which is so automatic for most experienced writers that they are unaware of it.

Like everyone else, the remedial student has been taught that before writing he must select a topic from the many which would fulfill a particular assignment. He must narrow the topic to appropriate proportions, find examples to support his thesis statement, and conclude the essay. The remedial student does indeed "know" this, but one of the reasons he is in a remedial class is that he cannot *do* it. His actual writing does not apply the things he knows.

When the student hands in an inadequate theme, it is marked and returned to him—and the teacher's problem then is how to help the student revise. Besides the need to write long explanations in theme grading, which even the most tireless teacher would gladly dispense with if it were possible, making corrections after the fact is a difficult art. It is far better to help the student *not* to make mistakes in the first place. This is what the highly structured writing assignment does: it begins to help the student before he writes the first word. Rather than have to break a bad habit, he is led to practice a good one.

Another advantage of the structured writing assignment, with its fill-in lines and spaces and its previously written words to be circled, as it appears in the early stages, is that the student is busy doing what clearly must be done—making preparations to write a theme. Yet he makes these preparations in a way he is familiar with outside of school. Besides, there is no traditional "look" or terminology to react against. He achieves what is actually an outline to write from, yet it looks nothing like the ordinary outline form.

Most remedial writing students are intimidated by a blank piece of paper. However, in the structured assignment there is no broad expanse of white space to threaten them. Instead, the white space is separated into short segments which can be filled in response to a specific question; the student is able to fill in larger and larger amounts of blank space as the assignments progress.

The structured forms are very explicit at first, and the student need only add his own content to the predetermined form. By not having to worry about both substance *and* organization, he can concentrate on the ideas themselves. Once accustomed to writing, he requires less aid and therefore less structuring in the assignment.

The following abbreviated examples show how the process of writing a theme is broken down into small, easily followed steps. They illustrate some of the explicit details which are gradually lessened as the student requires less help with essay organization.

Describing an Object

Begin your study of description by writing about the appearance of *an object*.

The purpose of a written description of an object is to let a reader know *what something looks like*. Do not write about how the object works or how it is used; confine your writing to telling about its *appearance only*.

A good idea when writing description is to assume that your reader has never seen the object you are writing about. After reading your description, would he recognize the object when he saw it? Would he be able to draw a picture of it? Could he visualize it in correct color and dimension?

Step One: Below is a list of simple objects which can easily be described. Note that it contains nothing of complex construction such as a typewriter or a car.

Add to this list several objects which you think you could describe in writing. Some sources of ideas are objects you see around you daily.

plate	hat box	window shade	toothbrush
chair	fork	shirt	billiard table
key ring	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Step Two: Complete the sentence below by writing the name of the object you wish to describe, chosen from the above list, in the blank space. Below the sentence, draw a picture of the object if you wish.

The object I wish to describe is _____.

Step Three: In the space below, write what the object is made of. (Examples: wood, brass, linen, oak, glass, etc.) If the object is composed of more than one substance, be sure to note them all.

Steps Four through Seven follow the pattern already established. In Step Eight, shown below, the student recapitulates what he has done previously but does not have before him the detailed instructions of each step. Step Eight, therefore, represents a plan for writing with content which he has formulated himself.

Step Eight: You are now ready to formulate a complete plan for your written description of an object. Fill in the lines and spaces below with the appropriate words from the previous steps.

The object I wish to describe is _____.
(Information comes from Step Two)

It is made of _____
_____.
(Information comes from Step Three)

The color of the object is _____.
(Information comes from Step Four)

The dimensions of the object are _____
_____ and it weighs _____.
(Information comes from Step Five)

The shapes of the various parts of the object are _____
_____
_____.
(Information comes from Step Six)

The parts are put together in this way: _____
_____
_____
_____.
(Information comes from Step Seven)
[Organizing by outstanding features or by contiguous parts was explained in detail in this step.]

Step Nine: You are now ready to write a description of the object you selected. Using the information recorded in Step Eight, write the description on a separate piece of paper. Use standard essay form. Give the essay a title before you begin.

The step-by-step writing method just illustrated by the closely structured writing assignment involving an objective response can also be used to elicit a subjective response. While the description of an object requires close observation of external details, writing about a personal emotion helps the student to observe and record his own feelings in a disciplined way, thus preparing him to recognize individual differences among people.

Writing About a Personal Emotion

Step One: There are many different kinds of emotions. Here are some common ones. As you read this list, think of those you have experienced. Add other emotions you can think of in the spaces to enlarge the list.

fear	confidence	shyness	eagerness
excitement	indifference	happiness	jealousy
anger	sympathy	embarrassment	enthusiasm
shock	boredom	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Step Two: An emotion is caused by a variety of situations (and many situations may cause the same kind of emotion.) For example: You are the player during a crucial part of a game and you drop the ball, losing the game.

From the following situations, select at least five you have had or can imagine yourself involved in [many more than those shown below were offered to students on the actual work sheet]. Then, in the space next to those you select, write an emotion from the list in Step One which tells how you would probably feel.

Example: You are one of the contestants waiting for the winners to be announced in an important contest. — eagerness

1. You are walking toward a person to whom you intend to apologize. _____
2. You are called to the telephone to speak to someone you never expected to hear from again. _____
3. You reach for your wallet to pay for some tickets and discover you left your money at home. _____
4. You are saying goodbye to someone who means a great deal to you. _____
5. You have been overcharged in a restaurant, and the waiter has his hand out for a tip. _____

In a sense, there are no "correct" answers. People respond differently, and what would cause intense anger in one person would cause bewildered retreat in another.

More than one emotion is possible in response to a situation, of course. But mixed feelings are harder to describe than a single one; therefore, for this assignment choose *one* dominant emotion for the situation.

Step Three: In the space below, write a situation you would like to use in order to tell about a personal emotion. It may be one from the list in Step Two, or you may choose a completely different situation. Then, on the line to the right, record the one dominant emotion you felt regarding that experience. Be brief; use the examples in Step Two as models.

Situation	Emotion
_____	
_____	
_____	_____

Step Four: (Students are here given examples of the physical manifestations of certain emotions and of how the same emotion can be shown in a variety of ways.)

Select one of the situations in Step Two next to which you have written an emotional response. Then list the physical way you would feel.

Example: "You are one of the contestants. . . " Excitement
Head: wobbly
Throat: dry
Heart: pounding fast
Skin: moist
Hands: clenched together
Knees: shaky

The Situation: _____ *The Emotion*: _____
_____
_____

Physical Manifestations: (Use as many of the possible ways the emotion can be shown as you can. The example above is a guide.)

Head _____
Throat: _____
Hands: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Step Five: In Step Three you chose a situation you would like to use in order to tell about a personal emotion. In the space below, list the physical manifestations of that emotion. (Use Step Four as a guide but do not repeat what you have written there.)

Head: _____
Throat: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Step Six: You are now ready to make your final plan for writing an essay about an emotion. Fill in the following:

I remember a situation which made me feel _____.
The situation was _____
_____
_____.
(Information comes from Step Three)
Other details a reader would have to know about the situation are:
time
place
other people involved
The emotion made me feel this way physically:
(Information comes from Step Five)

Step Seven: You are now ready to write about a personal emotion. Using the information recorded in Step Six, write the theme on a separate piece of paper. Use standard essay form. Give the essay a title before you begin.

The highly structured writing blanks are helpful for the morale of the remedial writing student because they present him with requirements similar to the essays expected in regular college level writing courses. He is less likely to feel second-class when he realizes that his observations are important, that his ability to recall detail and to express personal emotions are important parts of writing. He is given all the standard assignments in rhetoric, but at a level and by a method he can achieve, even though achievement is with specific aid in the beginning.

A measure of the effectiveness of this method is that students who have been taught by highly structured writings have wanted to continue working on their own with these planned forms, even after the end of formal class sessions.

This method does not make gifted writers out of nonverbal students, but it does the following:

prevents circular writing
forces the application of general rules
requires organized thought
removes the fear of writing
emphasizes positive action rather than recognition of error.

Therefore, the use of structured assignments in the teaching of remedial college writing gives students a measure of success they may never have experienced before.

Role-playing for slow learners

HARVEY WILKES

In teaching English to the very slow learner the English teacher has an effective technique in role-playing. Long used in drama and speech classes, this method of learning can be employed in the English class to bring bored and restless pupils out of their shells and, most important of all, to get them to learn to use their language more effectively.

I have used role-playing in conjunction with pictures. Sunday newspapers of large cities often print double page, colored action pictures, either photographs or paintings. It is preferable to use a picture with many people in it because there is a greater chance for large-scale pupil involvement. I once used a large color reproduction of Emmanuel Leutze's "Washington Crossing the Delaware." It is not necessary that the children be aware of the historical event; as a matter of fact, there is more chance for them to use their imagination if they do *not* know the historical background. I asked the class to look at the picture and tell me what is happening. Even if I do get the response, "That's Washington crossing the Delaware," I continue my detailed questioning: What's Washington doing? Why is he standing? What kind of look is on his face? Why is there blood on his shoes? How do the

people feel about fighting? All responses are jotted down on the chalkboard in outline form. By this time fifteen or twenty minutes of the period have elapsed, and the remaining time is used to develop an experience chart about the picture.

The role-playing takes place the next day. I again hang the picture on the chalkboard and instruct the pupils to examine it even more carefully than before. If necessary, I allow each one to pass in front of the picture so he does not miss any details. Let us assume that seventeen men are shown in the picture. Each pupil is assigned—or selects on his own—one man in the picture and becomes responsible for a detailed delineation of his character. The fact that in a class of thirty there will be some pupils who must share a figure is no great obstacle because no two pupils see a character the same way.

The pupils make up a short biographical sketch of the character. Besides giving each man's vital statistics, they answer such questions as: Why did he enlist? How long has he been in? What is he thinking now? What are his future plans? If two pupils want to work together on a character, I certainly encourage that. I have found that my very slow pupils take this work home with them and are anxious to continue it in class. The teacher will be greatly surprised at the quality of the final papers that are submitted. The mechanics of the writing are adequate because throughout the study the pupils have used dictionaries and the teacher as sources of correctness. But far outweighing any gains in improved usage is the fact that these children learn to express themselves in writing, something they ordinarily do with extreme distaste and reluctance. Boys who have not written one line in a whole year suddenly hand in two pages of writing on a figure in the picture.

The project may be carried a step further. Dialogues between characters may be presented. Pupils who would not say a word in class speak volumes as someone else. Once I used a picture depicting a Paris street scene during the French Revolution, and one of the dialogues between two Negro boys concerned itself with the question of justified violence.

One can readily see that a simple picture hung on a blackboard can cause a "dull" class to brighten with life and learning.

An antidote for the term paper headache

NEAL RESNIKOFF

Faced with the soul-shattering prospect of having to read a yearly batch of terrible term papers for a freshman composition course, I have experimented with assignments that might help the students produce more thoughtful, meaningful, and interesting work. What I have devised is a series of dry-run exercises which prepare the students for a library-oriented thesis paper and guide them through it without asking the teacher to do an inordinate amount of extra work.

I might add that I ask for a thesis paper because it sums up in a nutshell the kind of thinking that would seem to be a main aim of education: It requires the students to weigh evidence fairly and come to conclusions based on it.

There are, of course, many problems in teaching library research and methods of developing a thesis paper. The term paper headache may be caused mainly by our topic requirements. Too often students cannot appreciate literature or language problems; when given a free choice of topics, they tend to choose social or political problems. The variety of assignments which this implies solves a problem which teachers often find with library papers: lack of sufficient materials. And, more vital, when a student writes about something which deeply interests him, the quality of his thinking and writing seems to improve with little extra instruction; thus my students have wide latitude in picking topics.

Before they choose, I arrange several tightly structured assignments, which I intersperse among regular reading assignments and impromptus as I take time during three quarters of a term to go over each of the basic skills.

First, I try to make the students aware of what a thesis paper is in contrast to a report or argument paper. We start by discussing what makes an opinion valid, using an inductive approach, which seems a helpful means of convincing and motivating students. I ask students to write down reasons why they think something is good or bad. From

the answers, I focus on two conclusions: (1) opposing views can be equally valid, and (2) the test to see whether an opinion is sensible or not is to check the validity of all available reasons and evidence. From sample pieces of writing it is then possible for the class to pick out unfair debates as well as unbiased weighing of opposition views. This, plus discussion of the nature of scientific method and the need to have a pointed question or statement of hypothesis before search is made, helps the students begin to grasp the kind of thinking they are to use and to see how they can sharpen a general topic into a thesis statement.

To provide practice, I have the students read essays on a topic of interest such as critical comments on education and then, after a series of exercises, write a short thesis paper. I use essays from a class textbook.

The first of the exercises has the students react to some of the authors' ideas and propose lists of thesis statements that they could explore; this quickly shows their understanding of what a thesis is. There must also be discussion and practice on how to analyze the thesis statement for hidden assumptions and terms which need definition. Another assignment on these materials requires the students to write summaries of a few essays and paraphrases of parts using the format: "X believes that. . ." This, of course, intends that students transform materials written by others into their own style to make their term papers all of a piece.

Now the students are about as ready as they need to be to write a short practice thesis term paper, for one of the best ways to learn a skill such as writing or the breast stroke is, after a minimum of training in the dry abstract, to get into the pool and try. Also, an early exercise paper provides an opportunity for failure without penalty and for seeing where extra training is sorely needed. To provide framework for the complex task, I have the class discuss strategies of presentation, possible pitfalls, criteria for evaluation, footnoting, and sometimes index usage.

We usually list three main patterns of development that can produce successful papers on controversial research questions, pointing out that strategy A produces the most integrated pattern:

> A person using strategy A would (1) begin with his opinion, and then (2) present each opposing view with its arguments and evidence and his answers, and finally, (3) offer additional points favoring his views.
>
> Using strategy B, one would (1) open with his position, (2) present all opposing views and support them, and then, (3) all the arguments which support the writer's view. There would have to be a lengthy section at the

end analyzing the two sets of ideas. Hopefully, the writer will interpret, analyze, and comment on each argument as the paper proceeds.

A paper using strategy C would (1) start with neutral questions, and (2) the writer would share the thinking with the reader step by step before (3) stating a viewpoint or conclusion after each argument has been weighed.

Among pitfalls which bear pointing up for the student are these:

1. Lack of early definition of key term
2. Shift of definition in mid-paper
3. Presentation of a strong pro and con without a statement of the author's thesis
4. Lack of proof
5. Lack of an early and clear discussion of basic assumptions
6. Biased presentation of the author's view
7. Knocking down a straw man, a problem that does not really exist
8. Lack of full listing of possible alternatives or solutions to a problem
9. Not raising all relevant questions even if all answers are not available
10. Misreading a source
11. Taking a source uncritically
12. Bringing into the conclusion generalizations not proven or discussed in the paper
13. Not being truthful about pointing out strengths in the opposition's arguments or weak points in one's own
14. Writing a report rather than a thesis; that is, discussing a question whose answers involve readily obtainable and noncontroversial facts rather than a value judgment
15. Not making clear whose opinion is being presented
16. Not explaining or discussing quotes.

A list of criteria which I have developed with the class and would have them use to evaluate their papers might be something like the following, with a five point scale ranging from excellent to weak:

A. *Quality and Quantity of Material*
   1. Complete coverage
   2. Relevant opinions on all sides
   3. Relevant factual material and supporting evidence
   4. Variety and balance in kinds of books and articles
   5. Primary materials considered where possible
   6. Up-to-date materials included, especially for current affairs topics

B. *General Thinking and Communication*
1. Careful examination of assumptions
2. Definition or explanation of key and ambiguous terms
3. Careful support of generalizations
4. Honest awareness of gaps in knowledge
5. Drawing on own experience where relevant and attempting to overcome problems of one's own bias
6. Avoidance of oversimplification
7. No padding with unnecessary background information or other irrelevancies
8. Soundness of conclusions from evidence
9. Avoidance of logical mistakes
10. Adequate development of each point (explanation, evidence)
11. Clarity (avoidance of unnecessarily involved or vague language)

C. *Handling of Source Materials*
1. Accuracy of reporting
2. Awareness of authors' bias and backgrounds
3. Critical weighing of proof and arguments offered by sources
4. Adequate interpretation (avoidance of too many ideas of others presented without comment or interpretation)
5. Avoidance of overquotation
6. Mention and identification of writer or speaker

D. *Paragraphs and Organization*
1. Explicit relevance of each paragraph to main question
2. Unity within each paragraph
3. Use of helpful transitions
4. Organization of the whole (including choice of effective strategy)

There would also be sections for evaluation of format, including the form and use of footnotes and bibliography; and one for grammar, diction, and mechanics.

To introduce the class to the library on this first paper, I ask them to use an index or two and to begin solving the problem of figuring out what headings to look under for various topics. A short presentation in class of the ways indexes are set up takes care of most of the problems except the one about how to think of synonyms or headings. How, for example, one can locate information about the House Un-

American Activities Committee is not easy for most students to solve. They need to be taught how to fish around and look under "U.S. Government" and under the subheading of "Congress." Students also need to be taught the need to look under each year of an index, since topics such as "subliminal advertising" are listed in only a few volumes of the *Reader's Guide*.

After a fairly rapid introduction, the students take a week or two on this thesis term paper exercise. Usually the paper shows need of a follow-up exercise to provide further practice with basic concepts and skills. An effective way to do this is to divide the class into groups of four or five students and have each group write a paper cooperatively. To prevent the problem of weak students letting stronger ones do all the work, I group students with the same general writing ability, but try to balance the strengths and weaknesses as shown on the first paper. Here is a sample agenda for in-class meetings:

1ST MEETING

1. Decide quickly what thesis topic you will work on. The exact thesis can be worked out at the second meeting, and it may be altered after all information has been collected.
2. Talk about what in the thesis needs to be defined so that you all collect information on the same things. Discuss obvious pitfalls. Raise questions.
3. Tell what each of you knows now about the subject.
4. Make a list of possible index and catalog headings that might prove fruitful.
5. Have each person read a few articles on the topic so that you will all get an idea of the field, available arguments, and the focus that the group might take (see No. 7). If insufficient material is available, switch topics.
6. Decide on a clear way of taking notes on cards or on one side of sheets of paper so that later the notes can be divided easily among those who will be writing any particular group of pages and so that footnotes can be made easily and accurately.

2ND MEETING

7. Have each person report to the group on No. 5 so that all can get an idea of what typical arguments are in the field and so that problems of finding index headings, etc. can be discussed before it is too late.
8. Tentatively decide on a list of kinds of opinions or stands or information that you must get into the paper.
9. Decide tentatively on a strategy of presentation each paper will follow; thus, note taking can be directly pointed to a specific goal.
10. Divide responsibilities *so every member gets a taste of every resource* that might be valuable for this paper (and future papers) including:

the government document catalog
Essay and General Literature Index
New York Times Index
Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature
the vertical file (for pamphlets)
the book catalog (card catalog)
the *Congressional Record* index
Biography Index
Business Periodicals Index
Book Review Digest
International Index
Public Affairs Information Service
Government Publications Catalog
PMLA Bibliography

Have each person in the group take, say, two volumes of each of the above as his to check and find material to take notes on. Each person might also be responsible for an interview, if this seems like a good idea.

3RD MEETING

11. Check progress and see if plans or outlines for the paper need to be changed.

4TH MEETING

12. Revise the outline of the paper if necessary. Decide which people will be responsible for handling which part of the paper (based on the outline). Divide the work equally so that each one will write up about the same number of pages. Pool notes and information among the group members. When each person does his pages for the final copy, pages will *not* need to be rewritten or retyped by a single person so that there are not half page blanks, etc. Do be sure, though, that the writing of the various parts fits together as smoothly as possible and that footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout. Footnote details should be reserved for a final page, and the paper should have also a bibliographical list of all the sources actually used in the paper.

This, in brief, is how students can be prepared for the real term paper. The topic for the test paper is a problem, I know. Literature-related topics which go beyond narrow questions of literary criticism into areas with which students are usually vitally concerned might include:

1. Are the things Sinclair Lewis criticized about the small town really worthy of serious criticism?
2. Has the small town changed essentially from Sinclair Lewis's description and is the small town as it now exists in the U.S. a good place to live and bring up children?
3. Would the Peace Corps be a good place for a person like Carol Kinnicott?
4. Is the picture of Lilliputian politics in Book I of *Gulliver's Travels*

a meaningful metaphor for the way most U. S. officials get their positions and try to keep them?

Others, related to occupational problems, politics and world affairs, and science, might be:

1. What kind of organization is most helpful to the teacher? (especially National Education Association *vs.* the American Federation of Teachers)
2. Should I join the AFT or the NEA or both? (teachers)
3. Has the teacher good reasons to oppose the use of teaching machines?
4. How should teachers be trained? (Is the method used at WSU-EC a good method?)

To sum up skills and processes for the students, I prepare a list for them to follow, and to check progress I ask that the students inform me of their progress from time to time:

1. Pick a thesis.
2. Analyze for hidden assumptions.
3. List terms needing definition for yourself or the reader.
4. List headings you might look under in various indexes.
   Due _____.
5. Survey the indexes to see if information seems to be available.
6. Read a few representative articles to ascertain what is known in the field and what some of the opinions and arguments are.
7. Make a list of points of view or opinions needed for your paper as well as the amount and kind of historical or factual background.
8. Make a list of promising looking titles in the library. Use a list of promising indexes so that you can be sure to check each one.
   Due _____.
9. Read through the most promising sounding articles taking notes. Skim through others to find wrinkles missed in the main literature.
10. Make a preliminary outline which will indicate your strategy or plan of presentation.
11. Prepare for interviews which might be *helpful.* Analyze your relevant personal experiences.
12. Analyze your arguments carefully. Have you checked your sources' proof? Have you checked on facts in encyclopedias or yearbooks? Have you checked your sources' value or bias through biographical indexes?
13. Have you supported every key generalization? Are your arguments sound?
14. Have you linked each sentence to the thesis or subtopic? Have you used transitions between ideas?
15. Have you shown where you are paraphrasing a source and where you are speaking in your own voice?

16. Have you used correct footnote, quotation, bibliographical form?
17. Hand in your introduction plus one section of your paper linked to the introduction by a topic sentence outline.
    Due _____.

By following the exercises I have outlined above, the students write a total of three term papers, thus gaining much practice in complex skills while the teacher has little more marking or special instruction to do than he ordinarily would with a single term paper assignment. Meanwhile, the students generally find greater satisfaction on their final project than they otherwise would. Moreover, the papers should be better written than those we normally get and should be to us a pleasurable indication of their significance to the students. To make sure of this significance, we can even follow up the term paper by asking the students what action they plan to take on the conclusions they have reached or how their view of the world has altered. Thus euphoria may replace a nagging headache.

A substitute for the research paper

E. Graham Ward

Two recent *English Journal* articles[1] have taken the research paper to task as an unsuitable device in the teaching of composition, and rightly so. The research paper teaches the student to look only for information—secondhand information at that, to base his judgments on someone else's opinions, to be in John Holt's words (*How Children Fail*) a "producer," not a "thinker." To make matters worse, the research paper is usually on a subject unrelated to the student's direct experience. Papers on "Court Intrigues in the Elizabethan Era" (Shakespeare) or "'Economic Conditions Preceding the Dust Bowl" (Steinbeck) only serve to prove to the student, when his paper is returned, how smart the teacher is. The weak student becomes hopelessly confused by abstractions; the strong student becomes adept at the subtle plagiarizing of ideas.

If the research paper is such an evil to English teachers, how did it get started in the first place? Perhaps teachers felt the need for a paper longer than 500 words, a paper in which a student could willingly develop his subject. And after all, there is some special skill involved in the writing of a good research paper. The facts must be accurate. The author must be as objective as possible; he must get his point across without twisting the reader's arm. His conclusions must grow logically out of the evidence he has presented. From a practical point of view, too, the college-bound student should have some experience in writing a paper that demands more time than one weekend and at least attempts to deal logically with collected evidence.

A substitute for the research paper then seems needed, and perhaps a *New Yorker*-style Profile is one answer. In this project, usually given in the eleventh or twelfth grade, the teacher asks the student to write a character sketch of someone he knows who is both interesting and available for an interview. The purpose of this character sketch is not to pre-

---

[1] "Training for Research Writings," by Sister M. Christina, November 1964, and "Let's Get Rid of Research Papers," by Thomas Taylor, February 1965.

sent the subject fully rounded or even to probe his personality very deeply. The purpose is to capture him in, as it were, profile. The teacher should forbid the student to record opinions about his subject. In other words, the writer cannot say, "Mr. Jones is fun loving" or "athletic" or "ambitious" but must let these qualities speak for themselves through the evidence he has collected. If the student chooses wisely, hopefully guided by the teacher, the subject will be someone he wants to write about.

Although I have used this project in a different way subsequently, when I first tried it, at the general suggestion of Richard Niebling of Phillips Exeter Academy, I asked the students in my class to do Profiles of each other and gave them the following purposely nonchronological outline to work with. I checked their papers periodically to make sure they were on the right track.

1. Opening: The opening section should recount some present event in which the subject is involved and which serves to bring him into focus. Perhaps he recently did something noteworthy. Perhaps he is a well-known eccentric.
2. Visit I: The student should visit the subject in his most typical environment (classroom, baseball field) and describe this environment.
3. Interview I: In this section the student interviews the subject by prodding him into conversation, but not asking him obviously loaded questions (What do you think about God?). The emphasis in this interview should be on the subject's background. How did he get where he is?
4. Visit II: Here the student visits his subject at home and describes his home environment, trying to pick out the details which seem to summarize the subject. The emphasis in this section is on significant details.
5. Interview II: In this interview the student tries to get his man or woman to react, to give his opinions about things. But again no loaded questions are allowed. Perhaps the student can follow his subject around and see how he reacts to other people or see how he handles everyday affairs.
6. Conclusion: The concluding section should be somewhat dramatic. It should show the subject doing something typical, doing something that seems to summarize his character.

Of course the outline above is flexible. Quite frequently students

find it neeessary to telescope the two visits or the two interviews. The purpose of the outline is to suggest the type of approach desired. One girl, writing of an eccentric female member of her class, began:

> It was about 8:30 at night in Meredith Hall but sounds of a piano in the Common Room could be heard coming up through the floors. Rogerson O'Brian, known as Sonny, was doing her harmony homework. She sat with her feet squarely on the floor, her long blond hair in great disarray and a lost look on her face. She pressed keys slowly and thoughtfully, and the notes which were produced seemed to lack all meaning. First Sonny would play a slow scale and then would break into a popular song, only to quickly return to scales and chords as if she suddenly remembered she was doing homework. The out-of-tune piano bothered her, and she frowned and then sighed, for the harmony homework was difficult and seemingly beyond her grasp.
>
> "Oh, I'm going to drop harmony," she said. "Do you think I should take twelve hours of Russian instead?"

One Negro boy, writing of a white southern classmate, began:

> The small room was slightly unkempt when he began to straighten it. After he finished, everything was in order. The bed was made, books neatly stacked, and stray clothes were either hung up or placed in a laundry bag. Boxes of cookies, crackers, and candy were safely hidden in the bottom right desk drawer, out of the sight and reach of the dorm's greedy vultures. A book of prayers, a comb and brush, and some other miscellaneous articles remained on top of the chest of drawers, but did not detract from the now neat appearance of the cubicle. Two pictures, one of his current flame and one of a has-been, were lodged in the crack between the mirror and its frame. Both girls were fairly attractive. His precious *Thomas Jefferson High Yearbook* and his V.M.I. catalogue remained in their place of honor on top of the desk—in the middle, under the light.
>
> He then picked up a neat pile of books and said, "are you ready to go, boy?"

Both of these papers, the second to more extent, use the Home Visit to begin. The second beginning is also a good example of research paper objectivity, all the more remarkable under the circumstances. "Precious" is the only word that has a hint of opinion in it. And the quoted piece of dialogue, "Are you ready to go, *boy*—" not only shows an accurate ear for speech but subtly helps to suggest certain views the subject might have of the interviewer. One exchange student from Kuwait, for whom English was quite difficult, found that the direct approach of this project was something he could cope with, and in writing his paper about a soccer player he was able to develop his sentences and paragraphs without inhibitions.

If the Profile is assigned in the eleventh grade, then the twelfth grade

could logically supplement it with a Reporter-at-Large paper. This later paper follows, generally, the same outline as the Profile, but its complexity is increased by having as its center of attention a place or an organization rather than a person. I have had Reporter-at-Large papers on meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, on textile mills, on the surgery wing of a hospital, and on drugstore society. For this second paper I have altered the Profile outline as follows:

1. Bring the subject into focus. Perhaps you can describe it as you approach it.
2. See the subject more closely. Describe it in detail. What is its purpose?
3. Interview the owner or director. The emphasis here is on the history of the establishment and how it is now working.
4. Interview a worker or minor functionary. Look for the anecdotal side of the subject. Try to give it character. Perhaps the director himself can supply the anecdotes.
5. Leave-taking: See a characteristic thing about the place.

The main advantages of this project are threefold. First, it provides a substitute for the research paper, a substitute which allows the student to react creatively to the fresh, undigested evidence before him. Secondly, it teaches inductively certain aspects of objective writing, such as the importance of factual evidence and the consequent weakness of unsupported opinion about factual evidence. Of course, it trains the student to observe carefully and to have an eye for significant detail, an ability that can be transferred to reading. Thirdly, this project has some psychological support. The process of education, as Jerome Bruner points out, is from concrete to abstract, from the tangible to the visual to, finally, the linguistic. We expect students to write about things they can't touch, but can we expect them to write about things they can't "see"? The project attempts to train them to see a little better and to verbalize what they see. They may eventually realize that what they "see" in a Reporter-at-Large article, or even a Profile, is not one tangible object but something as complex and certainly as relevant as "Court Intrigues in the Elizabethan Era."

The writing skills of the English teacher: if gold rusts, what will iron do?

RAYMOND HOLLMAN

The Parson's comment in the prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* about the responsibility of the clergy to the laity can be applied especially to the relationship between the composition teacher and the student writer. If we English teachers do not keep polishing our own writing skills, how do we dare bemoan the tarnished condition of our students' themes?

The fact that most of us do not continue our writing beyond that required in college has been made particularly evident to me on two occasions. First, in 1962 when Floyd Rinker, director of the summer institutes sponsored by the Commission on English, was credited by *Time* magazine as saying that many of the English teachers in the institutes could not write with style and clarity, I was somewhat piqued because I had been a participant in one of those institutes. And although my composition grades during that summer session were satisfactory, I felt that Mr. Rinker's comments did apply to me.

Almost four years later I heard a similar accusation from John Warriner at a workshop in Clayton, Missouri. In effect Mr. Warriner said, "English teachers need to do more writing themselves." This time the indictment came after I had been teaching writing to college-bound seniors for four years, and I decided to respond. This year, I said to myself, I would write *with* my students as they were writing their research paper.

Fortunately, I was enrolled at a nearby university in an evening literature course that was requiring a research paper at almost the same time that my seniors were to write theirs. I decided that I would augment the textual material we had on the research paper by having my senior students look over my shoulder as I was writing my own paper. I decided to show them my master's thesis. I dug out my own copy

of the paper, "Solitude in the Early Works of Edwin Arlington Robinson." I had not even thought enough of it to have it bound. The manuscript was lying loose in the container that the blank paper had come in, so I had to put it in a folder before I could present it to my class as an example of a research paper.

I was surprised at the reception that the paper received. The students viewed my thesis with the same type of awe that we English teachers felt at meeting the real grammar and composition John Warriner at Clayton. They were full of questions: "Why did you write it?" "How long did it take you to write it?" "Who is Arlington What's-his-name?" I was so pleased with their interest that I began to question my own attitude toward it. Why had I left the paper buried all this time? I had attempted to read it during the previous summer but put it down unfinished, realizing that it contributed little or nothing to scholarly research. But it was an example of required research, and I presented it to my seniors as such. I was so impressed with their reactions that I took the thesis to a local bindery and had it bound. I intend to use it again each year when I introduce the research paper.

Since most high school students see the writing of a research paper as a formidable task, I was quick to remind them that their paper needed only to be patterned after my thesis. The main purpose for presenting my research paper to them was to help establish me in their minds as an authority on the research paper capable of guiding them in their work and eventually judging their final product. To establish further rapport, I announced that while they were writing their research paper, I was also going to write one and that I was going to present my work to them as a pattern to follow.

I had always taught and evaluated the research paper in steps, requiring the students to subject their work to criticism at each successive step. These steps were: (1) selection of subject and preliminary bibliography, (2) tentative outline, (3) notetaking, (4) final outline, (5) rough draft, and (6) final paper. This time, however, I was going to present those steps by showing what I had done on my own paper for each particular phase.

Each of these steps became more meaningful both to the students and to me when I was able to share my current experience. For example, my own difficulties in selecting a subject gave evidence of the importance of a careful selection. Although my paper had to be written on an eighteenth-century nondramatic English writer, my seniors were allowed to choose any subject that appealed to their interests. And yet my own

experience in the selection of a subject proved to them that interest should not always be the first consideration. I was interested in writing on Swift and studying his attitude toward rationalism in his "Modest Proposal." My instructor felt that it would be better to use Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, a longer work, as the basis for this study. After an initial look at Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, I learned that since it was primarily a satire on religion, it was not suitable for a discussion on rationalism. By the time I reported this discovery to my instructor, I realized that Swift was very popular with the other students in the class who were also beginning to select their subjects. When I saw that Swift was going to be overworked in that class, I switched to Samuel Johnson as the subject of the paper, limiting the topic to a discussion of Johnson as a biographer.

As I pointed out to my students, I was not as interested in Johnson as I was in Swift, but I made the change for two important reasons. First, since so many other students were writing on Swift, a paper on Johnson would be more original, and originality is a necessary ingredient of research. Discussing Johnson as a biographer and not as a lexicographer, as most students know him, was another move toward making the choice of subject more original.

The second reason for switching to Johnson as a subject was the availability of research material. While I was working on the paper, I was always able to go to the stacks in the library and find any book on Johnson that I needed to use. Some of the Swift writers, however, were scampering around during those last days frantically looking for a book that they needed, only to discover that it was being used by another procrastinator. I was able to use this experience to admonish those ambivalent students who in choosing their subjects were relying too heavily on their interests and not enough on the important factors of originality and availability of material.

Concurrent with the selection of subject was the preliminary bibliography, for I always insisted on knowing what material was available on a subject before I approved it. My own preliminary bibliography, though, served more to help establish for the students the proper bibliographic form for books, periodicals, and reference works. My tentative outline, presented as the next step, was designed to show the general direction that the paper was to take and to provide subtopic headings for the notes that were to be taken later.

It was during the note-taking stage that I had a difficult confession to make to my students. I admitted to them that in spite of the fact that I had written the usual number of research papers during my undergraduate and graduate work, this would be the first time I had put my notes

on note cards since my freshman rhetoric research paper. I hoped that the evidence of my conversion would reinforce the advantages that our text gave for using note cards. Knowing that my note cards were going to be exposed to 110 high school seniors did not, I believe, alter the quality of my research too much. The illegibility of some of my notes should prove to my students that I became so engrossed in my research that I was not producing the work for an audience. I must admit, though, that having an audience probably did increase the quantity of my notes.

In the final presentation, I combined the last two stages by presenting the rough draft and the final copy together. I gave my students copies of my research paper in three stages: the rough draft written in longhand, the typed improved and revised draft of the rough copy, and the typed final copy. By showing them the many changes that occurred between each copy, I was able to prove graphically the value of rewriting and to discourage the idea of handing in a first copy.

Presenting my final copy to them on the day that it was to be turned in and admitting that I had to finish typing the bibliography at the breakfast table that morning revealed a glimpse of clay feet to those seniors. I encouraged them to find mechanical errors that I may have overlooked. They were only too pleased to accommodate me, especially the brighter ones. In the five classes that reviewed the paper, at least seven or eight mechanical errors were discovered that I was able to correct before I handed in the paper.

It was an electric moment when I placed my graded paper on the opaque projector, showing first the critical comments and then the *A*. Because they had watched this paper grow through its successive stages and because some of them had corrected some of its mechanical errors, I believe that many of the seniors shared my relief and my pride.

I have saved all of the materials that I used for this Johnson paper so that next year when I teach the research paper I can use it again. I know that it will be of some help, but I wonder if it will establish the rapport that it generated this year. It will be useful just as my master's thesis was to show that I have written and that I know whereof I speak. But I think that during the succeeding year I will need to sign up for another evening course that requires a research paper so that I can again write *with* my students.

Five birds with one small stone: the vocabulary paragraph

DOROTHY LAMBERT

As a conscientious high school English teacher, I felt obligated to enlarge my students' vocabulary by a modest ten words a week. These ten might come from reading assignments, current events, class discussions, my brief talks, or organized vocabulary study. At the same time, I felt obligated to increase my students' competence in handling English sentences in the limited context of a paragraph. My students needed a chance to write often—but briefly—about subjects that interested them. Each week I tackled one writing point: fragments early in the fall; sentence variety in the spring.

My problems: how to get students to use new vocabulary in *context* and to demonstrate their mastery of each writing point? Yet how to find time to read and grade more papers? My solution: a weekly vocabulary paragraph, which forces students to apply both these weekly class lessons in practice, not just in exercises or drills. The basic directions are:

1. Use the ten given words[1] in a brief (one paragraph to a page) unified account on any subject that interests you. Words may be changed in form (such as, from noun to adjective) and arranged in any order. Underline the ten words.
2. Vocabulary words cannot be strung out in a list ("She is a voracious, inefficacious, notorious ingrate."), but must be used in a context that shows understanding of the word. The teacher will look for complete sentences and a *unified* episode that above all is interesting. If one word does not fit into the episode or topic, omit it and write it in a separate sentence at the bottom of the page.

---

[1] My intention is not to quarrel with how words are chosen for students to learn (though dividing the glossary in a literature anthology into ten-word assignments seems by far the worst way), but once the words are at hand, how to get students to use them in context without resorting to some type of dull drill.

3. Grading: (a) each word counts ten and must be correctly spelled; (b) gross errors, especially of the writing point of this or prior weeks, minus ten each; (c) incomplete or run-on sentences (except in dialogue or with permission) fail the paper. If word usage appears doubtful, the teacher will check the student orally. Revisions are accepted (often a single sentence rewritten at the bottom or on the back side of the paper).
4. Creativity: Interesting, legible papers will be rewarded by being posted on the board as models to emulate.

A student who writes such a vocabulary paragraph learns many things at once. He learns about new words and he learns how to use them. He must, from the basis of the ten words given, find his own topic to write about. He is encouraged to be as creative as he desires, but he must *say something*, hopefully about what he knows and likes. He must write an orderly, organized paragraph using complete sentences, and he must be brief.

A teacher who reads these paragraphs can evaluate them quickly by means of the deliberately streamlined grading system. Since the ten words are underlined, he can check at a glance to see whether all have been used acceptably. As he reads the paper, he can also check quickly for the writing point of the week. By the time he has finished skimming, he can tell whether the paragraph is sensible and unified. If a perfectionist, he must blind himself to other errors, saving them for another week, so that he can mark one short paper in a minute or two.

I grade rapidly, 0-100 on the basis of the ten words used acceptably in context, minus errors; I also comment briefly on the quality of the subject matter: "somniferous," "enthralling," "lethargic," "scintillating," invoking, if possible, last week's vocabulary words. If a student makes many errors, he can get no less than a zero, with revision offered as a saving second mark. Thus I quickly arrive at a weekly grade—not as accurate as a theme grade, but more accurate than two quiz grades, which would not test words or writing skills in context. By the semester's end I have ten to fifteen such grades, which become representative. More important, each student has practiced writing ten to fifteen times more often than he would ordinarily.

Even so, merely assigning a vocabulary paragraph and going over the directions is not sufficient preparation for most students. So that no student could coin such painfully original sentences as "He odioused me," or "The disparageness bothered me," I also required students to make a table of forms with six columns:

NOUN	VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	MEANING	QUALIFICATIONS ON USE

First in class, then as homework, they filled in the table, a backhanded way of making them use a thesaurus and dictionary. In this way, students found only *odious*, *odiousness*, and *odiously* listed; they drew a line through the verb column, killing *odioused* before it was generated. Besides dictionary practice, this transformation of a new word into its other forms gave students grammatical practice as well.

After they had filled in the first four columns, they priced meanings from various dictionaries, adding several near-synonyms and phrases to column five. I always checked for rare and archaic usages.

The first time my students filled in all sixty squares, whether or not they realized all the learning they'd been doing, they sensed they'd had a workout. Consequently, some weeks I would give them a mimeographed table half filled in, either the first four or the last six columns. Other weeks when the words were more familiar, I dispensed with the table or singled out one or two quirks of language usage. But despite the work, slower students needed the table to help them write their paragraphs later in the week; it gave them confidence that they could use such strange words well enough to get 100—if they checked their spelling.

Some find only one topic, and worry it for weeks. They must be encouraged to move on, explore another area. In either case, the teacher must collect and suggest good topics to those stuck in a rut.

Some cannot unify. I allowed them to begin writing these vocabulary paragraphs not as a unified, single item, but as a letter to some friend. Starting with the "Dear X" format and concluding with "Your friend," spared them the agonies of framing a beginning and ending, and allowed them to ramble in between. Letter writing was less intimidating to students who had written few coherent complete sentences, and never a *page a week!* After they'd formed the writing habit, I introduced them to the various ways to lead up to or down from a topic sentence.

Some refuse to think. Used to doing their assignment surreptitiously in the next class, they became adept at knocking off ten senseless sentences in as many minutes. These competent students made no overt errors; their paragraphs were simply silly or highly abstract.

Some abhor brevity. One girl consistently needed three pages to get the vocabulary-spouting astronaut to Mars. Eventually we com-

promised by having the man "report" on page one, and arrive on pages two and three. Otherwise, I made it quite clear that I stopped reading and grading at the bottom of the first page.

Some demand challenge. One boy insisted upon writing his words in one coherent, single sentence. Since he had the ability to do this without cheating by stringing adjectives out in a line, I laxly allowed him to exercise his ingenuity. He had been reading Faulkner.

Some fall passionately in love with words. Though all English teachers are working for just this, when it happens we shudder at the uncontrolled verbosity and pretentiousness.

This vocabulary paragraph, with its limitations as a writing exercise, I found most useful as a regular assignment in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. It provides a natural writing framework for improving basic skills, one by one. Also, it is then that students most strongly resist writing about topics imposed from above. In later years, students will write more critical themes, often about the literature being studied; but in the earlier years they will write more from their own experience.

Despite its limits, the vocabulary paragraph has outstanding advantages. For the teacher, its conveniences are many: one simple assignment producing varied and usually interesting papers; one set of short papers, easy to read and quick to grade, checking many skills.

Students know exactly what is expected of them. Slower students especially are given a chance, if they pay attention in class and work carefully, to earn a high grade fairly easily (and why not?), perhaps even the honor of being "posted" for all to read.

Such a "limited-unlimited" assignment (limited in structure, length, and use of words; unlimited in subject, point of view, or mood) sparks the imagination and elicits the best efforts from even mediocre students.

Free association: a writing assignment that works

ROBERT G. LAMBERT

Certainly one of the chief images most students bring into their English classes is that of the English teacher as the red-inked ogre slashing out misspellings, commas, whole words, phrases, even sentences—and feelings as well. These students view their English teacher as a destroyer of expression rather than as an editor of it, an enemy rather than an ally. As a result, when called upon to write, students often "block"—they compose little, count the words they do produce, and pray for June. The writing they manufacture out of fear and hostility is often stilted and pretentious.

To counter this fear of writing, I use free association exercises during the first ten minutes of each class for two weeks. Initially, I ask students just to write furiously for ten minutes, merely jotting down whatever words come into their heads in whatever order they appear. "No mistakes in spelling or punctuation will be counted. It's your sheet of paper: all you need do is fill it with words." And what words appear from this random flow of thought!

> riding stable—which naturally had horses. Lots of friends—me—on the horses. Stuck in the mud with Janie crying. Janie now 21—all grown up—but yet I see in her horses, hot summer days, riding through the woods with limbs snapping across our faces. Run-away horses—free and wonderful! Belle and Red and Babe and Tony—all gone now. Barns, woods grass—nature—gone! Horses running for the barn. Bad news—progress coming our way—land sold—barn going—subdivision houses—ruination. Neighborhood not the same—Where are the horses' puddles and barn? Where is little Janie who cried when her horse wouldn't move from the puddle? Marriage, country, barn horses. My children will ride—only difference—they will naturally outgrow the horses. The horses will not be taken away from them.

Once students become accustomed to entering the classroom and immediately spilling words onto blank, waiting paper, I try to encour-

age focus by asking students to free associate on an important object from their childhood; two wrote on teddy bears.

> teddy bear—brown and cuddly—soft fur—under the swings while I cut paper dolls—musty smell after lying in leaves—amputate arm—round ear floppy enough to hold on to—pillow to lay on—hemophilia of its cotton soul in left leg—dog chews off button eyes—dog bed for 7 new puppies.

Often, however, most of the free association is a jumble—with a memorable sentence hidden among the words, waiting to be freed: "I live with my mother in a little round house. No corners—just mother in a little round house. . . small, tiny, minute, a little round house."

Once the student has committed—really committed—himself to paper, then the task of teaching writing may be properly begun. The most promising of the free writing exercises, or perhaps only parts of them, can serve as the basis of more formal, planned, controlled writing —an essay, a theme, an article. For now the subjects are those that welled up from the student: they are his concerns, his impressions, his passions, his language, his self.

Trying free writing will help clear the air of the stuffiness that weighs down so many English classrooms, will relax the students, and all at once provide the teacher with a set of papers that—for a change—will be genuinely exciting to read, intriguing to ponder.

A technique for theme correction

MICHAEL GRADY

Perhaps the most debilitating part of the job for the freshman English instructor is the weekly meeting of red pencil and white paper. In the correcting of themes, only technical proficiency is necessary, and the college instructor will often feel frustrated by and antagonistic toward 50 or 100 papers which may demand as much as eight hours of comparatively mindless, mechanical labor. But it is possible for the teacher to at least halve his theme correction workload while meeting his ethical responsibility to his students and often while encouraging them to better efforts than achievable under the Write-Correct-Grade-Rewrite system. The technique is simple—let the student mark his own paper.

It is impractical to expect that a student can mark his own paper with competence at the beginning of a semester. Thus, I have found value in marking closely and precisely the first three sets of papers from my first-semester freshman composition classes. In addition, I have attempted to add a brief comment or evaluation of the paper as a whole, in 2-3 sentences, at the end of the work. By the end of the third week of the semester, the students are quite specifically aware of the style of correction I use and of my grading standards. From that point in the semester on, I feel any additional written commentary and correction by me *is* redundant and in some sense, unnecessary. The student should have achieved the minimal standard of punctuation, usage, organization, and general mechanics.

Consequently, beginning with the fourth composition, I merely read the papers and mark in my roll book the grades they earn. I put no mark on the papers themselves, no grades even, and return the students' papers to them at the next class meeting. At that time, I pass out mimeographed copies of the following form and tell the students that it is part of the learning process and of the requirements for the course that they now attend to the mechanical matters of correction in lieu of merely recopying *my* corrections.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Buy a red pencil.
2. Sharpen it.
3. Use the sharpened red pencil to mark all the errors on your paper.
4. Use the dulled red pencil to write a general evaluation of the paper, either at the beginning or the conclusion of the text.
5. Use the blunt red pencil to assign a letter grade to the paper.

When marking the paper, look for the following matters of mechanics, diction, organization, and logic:

mechanics Comma splices, run-on sentences, misuse of color or semicolon, failure to underline a word considered as a word
Spelling
Sequence of tenses and correct tense form

diction Is the correct word used in the correct place?
Do pronouns have one, clear noun as referent?
Do pronouns agree with the grammatical form of their referents?
Are *it* and *this* used in an imprecise manner?

organization Is there some central topic that acts as a backbone for the paper?
Is there an introduction that looks forward to the body of the paper?
Is there a body to the paper that develops all ideas expressed in the introduction?
Is there a conclusion and summary that indeed sums up the body of the paper and comes to some conclusion about the topic?

logic Does the paper as a whole, or any part of it, "beg the question," i.e., not stick to the topic?
Can the phrase *non sequitur* be applied to any paragraph or part of a paragraph?
Are there any examples of overgeneralization? (key words: *all*, *never*, *always*, *every*, etc.)
Are there any examples of syllogistic reasoning used incorrectly?

Note: If major errors are not caught and marked, the tentative grade I assigned the paper will be lowered; all matters of punctuation, spelling, and diction must be caught and marked for the grade to stay as assigned. An extremely scholarly job of correction and marking could improve the tentative grade up to one full grade.

Justification—Objectivity

In requiring the students to mark, evaluate, and grade their own work, I believe I force them to treat that work objectively. We all know the "it's-my-baby" syndrome of the freshman: "I wrote it, and I got *B*'s and *A*'s in high school, so how could it be as bad as you say it is?" By being forced to read his own paper as if it were written by someone else, for the purposes of marking and grading, the student very often comes to learn that although it *is* his "baby," its modifiers *do* squint, and that a radical linguistic strabotomy now may cure what could have become a serious adult defect later. And the student learns *from himself*, without developing an immediate, resentful response to an instructor's commentary. One may admit to oneself that the baby is cross-eyed, but let another person mark that feature, and the feature is automatically defended as Olympian.

Justification—Retention

I'm sure we have all had the experience of marking the same one or two comments on paper after paper of the same student—who dutifully corrects the errors on each rewrite and immediately performs the same in the next theme. I have found, pragmatically, that the average student's self-esteem prevents him from making the same error repeatedly when he has to answer to himself for each paper. If a kind of error is pointed out in the first three instructor graded themes or in lecture thereafter, the student is much more likely to *retain* the information for avoiding such an error and to *refrain* from making that error if he has to answer to himself rather than to an abstract, anthropomorphic professor.

Justification—Individual Contact

We must accept, I think, that the best teaching is individual teaching—in conference, in the office. By not putting a grade on themes, the instructor forces the student to come to the office to "see how I'm doing"—to see if his own evaluation coincides with the instructor's.

At that time, the instructor may pull out back papers, trace progress, suggest specific, individual areas for improvement, and encourage or bring back to earth those whose self-evaluation is radically different from his.

Justification—The "Halo Effect" and the Instructor's "Second Chance"

Often an instructor may find himself grading by the number of times he has interrupted his reading to circle a spelling error or to insert a missing comma in red. But two or three words may have been consistently misspelled throughout one paper, and the missing commas may be one error, consistently repeated. Nevertheless, a negative "halo effect" may result and cause the instructor to give what is essentially a *C* or perhaps *B* paper a low grade, because the instructor sees red—really the same error marked all over page one, two, three, four, and five. By omitting mechanical error marks, the professor is more nearly likely to judge correctly the total paper as to thought, content, organization, and logic, without being distracted by interruptions of marking while reading or by total error count. No paper that is atrocious in mechanical matters should be passed, but is it wise to fail a thoughtful, well-organized paper on a few comma splices or spelling errors?

In addition, by requiring the student to grade his own paper, the instructor gives himself a second chance at evaluating the student's work. I have occasionally found myself facing a student who wanted further justification for my assigned grade; let us say a *C*. The student thought the paper better than a *C*, and on rereading the work, I tended to concur. In such a case, one must either attempt to defend a seemingly defenseless position or else succumb to the embarrassing necessity of changing the original grade in the student's presence.

If the instructor enters the student grade next to his own in the roll book when he receives the returned, evaluated papers, he can see where radical differences in evaluation exist. Then the instructor is warned to reread the disputed paper closely. If the paper *does* deserve a higher grade, the instructor may change the original grade, to be fair to the student, without loss of face. If the paper still requires the instructor's original grade, indication exists of the necessity for individual conference and review of course standards.

Cautions—The Guiding Hand and the Appropriateness of the Technique

The instructor using this technique will find that in most cases the student will come to do a decent job of error catching and of grading.

Most students, indeed, will tend to undergrade themselves, and overgrading is usually a matter of a half-grade: a *C+* vs. a *C* or a *B—* vs. a *C+*. However, I have found it worthwhile to correct an additional set of essays once, about halfway through the semester, to reestablish or reinforce the standards presented during the early part of the course. A midterm usually provides the opportunity for this special correction by the instructor. And he will occasionally find the need to mark comparatively sophisticated errors of logic or agreement that are present in weekly papers, errors that could easily be overlooked by even the most diligent average student in his own correcting.

The experienced instructor of freshman English may use effectively the technique described in this paper. Probably the new instructor is better off suffering through a semester or two of consistent theme grading so that he may become aware of the most common sorts of student errors and learn how to explain them succinctly before attempting to let the students do the work. In experienced hands, the technique I describe is valuable and timesaving. In less experienced hands, it could cause problems and waste of time.

Finally, the technique is probably most reliable and appropriate for freshman composition or upper division composition classes.

SUMMARY

If we accept as a goal of freshman composition that the student be led to treat his work objectively and to realize and correct his own errors, then any system of theme marking that helps achieve that goal is ethically justifiable. If a system exists which achieves that goal while at the same time freeing the instructor from sheer drudgery so as to allow him more time for class planning, student conferences, and the other necessary concomitants of his position, then that system is to be preferred. I believe I have found such a system, and I offer it to my colleagues for their own use.

"The world is full of wonders." Write all about it!

VERONA F. ROTHENBUSH

Several years ago I read a comment by Rachel Carson that children should be taught to wonder, to think about the marvels of the world around them. Ever since, I have given my seventh graders this oral assignment:

> The world is full of wonders. Think about these and decide what you would like to nominate as one of the wonders of the world. It may be a wonder of nature or man-made. It may be little—a flower, a shell; it may be as large as the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls. You may bring anything to class to help you support your case, to prove that what you nominate in a wonder of the world. Come to class prepared to nominate your wonder of the world. You may have two to five minutes to make your nomination; if you need more time, see me about it.

Again I have been humbled at the results. I have heard boys and girls nominate the eye, the ear, electricity, music, classical music, education, the brain, the schools, photography, the sun, Niagara Falls, and many others. They have brought in charts, diagrams, records, pictures. I have been impressed with the high degree of sincerity, originality, and preparation displayed.

My first writing assignment to seventh graders is to write autobiographies. I do not think that children should be required to write autobiographies over and over again throughout their school careers. But at the beginning of the seventh grade, I think it is a good time for boys and girls to look back on their lives. I say to them something like this:

> Each of you is to write a book about the most interesting subject in the world to you—yourself. We'll start out writing chapters. Write any chapter you wish first and hand it in for me to read. When you have finished all your chapters, choose a title for your book and make a sample cover

> design. When these have been OK'd by me, arrange your chapters in the order you wish. Copy your book in ink. You may include pictures—Snapshots, original sketches, or pictures cut out of a magazine. Make your cover and assemble your book.

Of course there are questions. What can I write about? I reply, "That time you were most embarrassed or the time you got caught. Write about your younger brother or sister or your older ones, your first day at school, your pet, the time you got lost, your day at the dentist, or the time you learned to ride a bicycle or a horse."

The days of the next two weeks or more are spent in writing and in conferences. I find that personal conferences are more rewarding than notes on their papers, especially for this first assignment. I learn quickly *who* has *what* writing problem. Some pupils I find cannot yet write. I do not mean the mechanics of writing; that they can do, but they cannot express their ideas in writing that makes any kind of sense. These pupils must dictate to another pupil or to me. But finally all the books are in. Each pupil has written a book. I have learned a lot about my pupils, and they have gained a new respect for themselves.

Using the overhead projector to intensify time and interest factors in English instruction

LOIS WILSON PARKER

This is a report of an effort to intensify the time and interest factors in English instruction which revealed some encouraging possibilities in the use of the overhead projector.

The room was equipped with a projector, screen, transparent plastic squares, and special pencils for writing on them. Each student was instructed to write one brief paragraph on an assigned subject within an allotted time. The projector then set the written work before the class for correction by the students themselves. The instructor read the paragraphs aloud, marking each correction only after class discussion rendered an agreement as to how a certain error might be

overcome. A short hour of rapid-fire work resulted in an effective, satisfying coordination of the students' and teacher's efforts.

The benefit of discussing matters of usage before the students' work became cold was evidenced in increased student interest. Never did anyone sit quietly bored and disengaged from the class endeavor; the writing already done, every moment was filled with participation. Through the projector presentation and the concomitant discussion, the instructor gained a clearer view into reasons for many student difficulties. Misconceptions of language and composition came to light, revealing the roots of some prevalent errors and enabling the teacher to remove the cause in order to begin a cure. Most important was a distinct rise in enthusiasm among the students and diminishing errors in subsequent themes.

Numerous advantages notwithstanding, there are two elements which may be considered points of caution when the overhead projector is used. First, enthusiasm can be quickly swept away by too much of this device. The second caution is in regard to the eyesight of the instructor. As he must look directly into a powerful light shining through the lens of the projector during most of his exposition, a good pair of sunglasses is necessary. Although these aspects would cause one to include the projector in the teaching method with care, as with a bit of salt, its spicy effect may become an equally important ingredient in the freshman English classroom.

Crisp, economical use of time and a presentation which catches student attention, arouses student interest, and enlarges the teacher's field of operation seem ample reasons for teachers of English composition to say of the overhead projector, "Let's try it!"

Slang '66

DIANE WEISSBERGER

My tenth grade slow class consists of twenty-two pupils whose IQ's range from 74 to 85. Their instructional reading level spans fourth to sixth grade with their level of comprehension slightly higher—sixth to eighth grade. These students typically come from large families, perform a sizable share of the housework, take care of younger siblings, work after school, and have attended more than one junior high school. Because they read the daily papers, watch television often, listen to the radio, and travel about the city by themselves, they have accumulated a vast store of practical knowledge which is often lacking in the so-called regular or accelerated students.

The unit I am about to describe grew spontaneously from an earlier unit on levels of usage. The class agreed that to get along one must understand several kinds or varieties of talk and know when and where to use each one. Slang particularly fascinated the class, and the suggestion to compile a dictionary of teenage slang was received with enthusiasm.

On the first day, we laid the framework for our project. Some time was spent reviewing exactly what was meant by slang so that the pupils would know which words to include and which to discard. One girl acted as secretary and recorded on the board what her classmates said each entry should include. An important task remained; we had to agree upon a plan for collecting the words. After some discussion, we decided that the members of the class would act as reporters and gather teenage slang. If slang is the language spoken by teenagers, the best way to record it would be to circulate among the groups in the school and note their conversations.

The school lunchroom was our meeting place on the second day. Reporters split up, circulated among the tables, and recorded slang words on three-by-five cards which had been distributed earlier. It was immediately obvious that this class possessed a definite flair for acting. I actually heard one boy say, "Pardon me, Madam, I'm taking a survey.

Can you help me?" The girl roared with laughter, but she gave him six words and their meanings!

We returned to our room for the last five minutes of the period and agreed to organize our cards and supplement our lists with words we heard after school. For most of my students, this was an entirely new way to learn. Many had sat in classes in which they had neither moved from their seats nor changed a set routine from September until June. Here was dictionary work, which they had had thrust upon them since elementary school, placed in an entirely new and more appealing light. Here also was an indication of the breadth of the English program. It was not something confined to the classroom and a textbook. It was something living, something that brought the speakers into contact with others in all kinds of situations.

On the third day, the students took turns reading their individual lists. This was to check for repetitions, since it would have been a waste of time and energy for five or more students to define the same word. The word *boss*, for example, appeared on everyone's list. For the second part of the period, we divided the words and sat in groups of two. Spaced throughout the room were eleven groups of students working together to write simple meanings for the words. While they were doing this, I went from group to group giving help wherever necessary. There was one hundred percent participation since each group knew it was responsible for a certain number of words.

In discussing a word entry with a fellow student, the pupils were required to express themselves clearly and define their own language carefully. In many cases, there were disagreements about the meaning of a particular word. We discovered, for example, that in North Philadelphia a word meant one thing, but in West Philadelphia the same word meant something else. Here the pupils were coming to grips in a meaningful way with the complexity of linguistic geography. In all similar disputes, we decided to accept the meaning prevalent in our particular neighborhood.

The librarian granted permission to use the school library on the fourth day. Earlier in the day, two girls came to me during their lunch period and put the letters of the alphabet on large sheets of blank paper. There was one sheet for each letter; they were spaced in order on the library tables. During this class period, my students walked around the various tables and wrote their words on the appropriate page. They carried their lists and checked off each word as it was committed to the master sheet. By the end of the activity, all words

beginning with the same letter were on the same sheet. We also tried to get as correct an order as possible on the individual pages. The students were advised to place their word at the top, bottom, or middle of the sheet according to the way it was spelled. Actually, the students were using their alphabetizing skills twice—once when they had to find the proper page and again when they had to fit the word among others beginning with the same letter.

At this point, a group of students volunteered to do some of the more specialized work at home. There were two typists, two proofreaders, and an artist who created a spectacular cover.

Even though I had been evaluating the individual and group work all along, I wanted some formal means of measuring their growth. The students were asked ten questions on all the concepts of language we had studied. They were told that the best answers would be used as the introduction to the dictionary. For once, they were not writing for a mark. They were writing because each wanted to demonstrate his knowledge and because each wanted his answers to appear in the introduction.

The test did not take all of the period. During the last fifteeen minutes, pupils who were finished took the stacks of papers that had been mimeographed and quickly flipped through them to make sure that there were no blank or faulty pages and that all the papers were right side up. After class, I read the tests, selected the best answers, and mimeographed the introductory page.

What took place on the sixth and final day of the project was an illustration of what a class working as one team can accomplish in a short time. We met in the library as we had done on the fourth day. Using an assembly line technique, the boys and girls walked in order, took a page from each pile, and handed the pack to the people in charge of stapling. There were several cases of dizziness, but we assembled 150 copies in less than one period!

The dictionaries were divided equally among the members of the class. Each person gave out his copies to his best friends and favorite teachers. The prestige and self-image of my supposedly slow students rose to great heights with the appearance of this dictionary. The principal made a special visit to the class to congratulate the pupils and asked for five copies to send to the Board of Education. For many of the boys and girls, it was probably the first time in their lives that they had a few choice copies of something that everyone wanted.

All during the unit, interest was at a maximum. This was *their*

project, and *they* wanted to see it through to the end. I was pleased to see that students frequently labeled apathetic had identified with a project and proved to all that they could undertake a difficult job and do it well.

Many skills were developed and used in the course of the unit. The students wrote meanings, redefined their own words, and received practice in alphabetizing. I feel that the unit had variety as well as unity. In a short time, we met in the class, the lunchroom, and the library. We worked as individuals, in groups of two, and as a class. We interviewed, we recited, we wrote, and we assembled materials. All of these activities were aimed at a single goal—to produce a dictionary of teenage slang.

The students realized how much they had learned. To reinforce this feeling, they had in their hands the concrete results of their labor —*SLANG '66*.

"The better I am able to stir the imagination of the students, the better the students write"

VERONA F. ROTHENBUSH

I have found that the better I am able to stir the imagination of the students, the better the students write. My ninth graders read a unit of short biographies, autobiographies, and some essays. In this unit is an essay, "An Adventure in Viewpoint," by Edwin Way Teale. I used the idea of that title for the springboard. I said nothing about writing. But I asked the pupils to pretend for a few days they were looking at the world through the eyes of another—the eyes of another person or the eyes of an animal. In the unit was the biography of a blind person, and we had discussed perceiving the world as a blind person might. For several days I referred to this assignment. I asked that consciously each day they pretend to be someone or something else. What would the world be like? Then one day when they came to class, I unexpectedly said, "Take out your pencils and paper. Write a paragraph or more beginning with the sentence, 'For several days I have looked at the world through the eyes of _____.' What has this adventure meant to you? What have been your thoughts, your feelings? Plan your paper, write it, and edit it. You will have only this period."

The results have been interesting and thoughtful writing. Some pupils have viewed the world through the eyes of a handicapped person. (I was amazed at the extent to which many had carried out the adventure—doing many things such as eating full meals blindfolded.) Some had chosen to look through the eyes of a pet while others had viewed the world through the eyes of a parent or brother or sister. One boy wrote of the viewpoint of a soldier in Viet Nam. I quote from this paper because it came at a time when the news was full of draft card burnings and because it expresses a view not usually associated with students from poor backgrounds.

I feel that if I were a soldier over there, it would mean a great deal to me—not because of the fighting but because of what I would be fighting for. For we are helping a nation that wants freedom and liberty, and is fighting to get it just as all Americans have fought and always will fight.

It's like fighting for your own country. For if Communism would conquer one nation at a time, soon there wouldn't be any freedom in the world. I would surely give my life for a reason like this—to die for freedom and liberty.

I had had no idea this lad had felt this way. Over and over again I read those papers I was amazed at the high quality of thought and writing displayed. The pupils actually seemed to mature as a result of this experience; they became at least for a little while less self-centered. Indeed, one class had been so indifferent and blasé that I would not have thought such thoughtful writing was possible for them.